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W. KIRCHON &
A. OUSPENSKY

RED RUST

A THEATRE GUILD PLAY

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Red Rust

THEATRE GUILD PLAYS

By George Bernard Shaw

HEARTBREAK HOUSE

BACK TO METHUSELAH

THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE

SAINT JOAN

CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA

ARMS AND THE MAN

THE MAN OF DESTINY

ANDROCLES AND THE LION

PYGMALION

THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

MAJOR BARBARA

By Leonid Andreiev

HE WHO GETS SLAPPED

By Georg Kaiser

FROM MORN TO MIDNIGHT

By Leonhard Frank

KARL AND ANNA

By Frantisek Langer

THE CAMEL THROUGH THE NEEDLE'S EYE

By V. Kirchon & A. Ouspensky

RED RUST

New York · BRENTANO'S · *Publishers*

A THEATRE GUILD PLAY

Red Rust

BY

V. Kirchon

AND

A. Ouspensky

ADAPTED BY

Virginia and
Frank Vernon

New York · BRENTANO'S · *Mcmxxx*

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The Theatre Guild presented The Theatre Guild Studio in RED RUST *for the first time in New York City on December 17, 1929, at the Martin Beck Theatre, with the following cast:*

CHARACTERS

Constantine Terekhine	*Students*	Herbert J. Biberman
Fedor		Franchot Tone
Piotr		Luther Adler
Vassili		Ackland Powell
Lutikov		George Tobias
Voznesienski		Spenser Kimbell
Bezborodov		Lionel Stander
Petrossian		Elliot Sullivan
Pimples		Lee Strasberg
Lenov		William Challee
Andrei		Harry M. Cooke
Besseda		Albert Angell
Supervisor of the Students' House		Charles Peyton
Loukitch	*Members of the Commission of Control*	Curtis Arnall
Nicolai		Boris Korlin
Zavialov		Harry Wilson

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Secretary of Commission of Control		CHARLES PEYTON
Nina Verganskaia	*Women students*	GALE SONDERGAARD
Lisa		RUTH NELSON
Varvara		VIRGINIA BERRY
Mania		EUNICE STODDARD
Fenia		FLORENCE HOUSE
Olga, Peasant		RUTH CHORPENNING
First Old Woman		HELEN PLAUT
Second Old Woman		LIZZIE RECHELLE
First Passer-by		WELLS RICHARDSON
Second Passer-by		CHARLES PEYTON
Third Passer-by		FRANK VERIGUN
Beggar		THOMAS FISHER
Youth		JOSEPH KLEIMA
Peddler		GEORGE SHOEMAKER

Students, Laborers, etc.; LEO CARROLL, JULIAN GARFIELD, LAWRENCE HART, M. FISHMAN, ROBERT CAILLÉ, JOHN ELDER, GEORGE BRATT, ROBERT PAGE, FRANK STRINGFELLOW, BERT STUART

Production staged by HERBERT J. BIBERMAN

Production Committee: HERBERT J. BIBERMAN, CHERYL CRAWFORD, HAROLD CLURMAN

SCENES

The action of the play takes place in Moscow, between March and October 1926.

Act One

Scene I: *A room in a students' house.*

Scene II: *A gymnasium.*

Scene III: *Terekhine's room in a students' house.*

Act Two

Scene I: *The Red Square.*

Scene II: *Same as Scene I. Act I.*

Act Three

Scene I: *Same as Scene I. Act I.*

Scene II: *Same as Scene I. Act I.*

Scene III: *Terekhine's room.*

The Theatre Guild, an organization for the production of plays of artistic merit, is solely directed by its Board of Managers which selects its plays and artists, controls its policies, and is constituted as follows:

Theresa Helburn — Philip Moeller — Maurice Wertheim
Lawrence Langner — Lee Simonson — Helen Westley

Executive Director — Theresa Helburn
Producing Director — Philip Moeller
Guest Producing Director — Rouben Mamoulian

Directors of Organization
Lawrence Langner — Maurice Wertheim

Business Manager
Warren P. Munsell

Kate Drain Lawson, *Technical Director*
Cheryl Crawford, *Assistant in Casting*
Herbert J. Biberman, *Production Stage Manager*

Play Department
Barret H. Clark
Harold Clurman
Anita Block, *Reader of Foreign Plays*

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For New York
Addie Williams
For All Other Cities
Marie Johnson
Lucille Luttrell

Charles A. Riegelman, *Counsel*

Act One

ACT ONE

SCENE I

The scene takes place in a room in a Student's House in Moscow, in 1926 or '27. At rear are two sets of double-deck bunks, parallel to the rear wall. At the center there is just room enough for a door between them. At the extreme right and left are two single bunks, set at right-angles to the double bunks. Across the front of the room there is a low study table, with stools placed at either end, and two benches behind it. The table is piled high with books and papers. The bunks are covered with gray and brown blankets. The room is small, and is surrounded by open space. In the background towers the top of Lenin's tomb, behind which is the Kremlin wall and the towers and domes beyond it.

A siren is heard. The curtain rises on darkness, and as the siren dies out, the lovely melody of "God Save Our Noble Tsar" is heard and the Kremlin Domes become visible. As this melody dies down, the Domes fade out again, another siren is heard, and the strains of the Communist Anthem, "Arise Ye Children of Starvation" burst forth. The Lenin tomb becomes distinct. At the end of this last melody, the siren is heard again.

There is complete darkness, and for a moment complete silence. Then a voice is heard in the darkness.

VOICE OF BEZBORODOV

In-the-name-of-the-socialist-Soviet-republic-of-Russia—!

VOICE OF LUTIKOV

What?

VOICE OF BEZBORODOV

Take your God-damned foot off my belly!

VOICE OF LUTIKOV

Here, Comrades, you have the principle of compensation. Since we have no room to live in, and must crawl like vermin over each other, we have no heels on our shoes. Think how unbearable to live in this congestion, if there were new English heels on everybody else's shoes. It would be suicidal. So Comrade, if you're uncomfortable, take your stomach from under my foot. [*He kicks him.*]

[*Siren.*]

ANDREI

Miaow!

LUTIKOV

Who did that? [*Silence.*] Damn it, who did that?

ANDREI

It is my voice. I am Professor Nikolai's cat. He has sent me as an emissary. Are all the students in Moscow ready for the examinations? [*Groans.*] First question

is— "What is the difference between a bolshevik and a Communist?" [*Laugh.*]

PETROSSIAN

A Communist is a bolshevik who shaves and carries a portfolio.

[*Guffaws of laughter.*]

ANDREI

Second question is— "What's worse, a skunk or a bourgeois capitalist? [*Guffaws of laughter.*] Third question is— "Which is more despicable, the old God of the White Russians whom we have kicked the hell out of our country, or the new beaureaucratic portfolio members of the Communist party who are strangling us with their red tape?"

LUTIKOV

Now that's going too far! Kick that scurvy cat out. It stinks!

ANDREI

Don't be a fool. It's not the cat that stinks, it's Pimples.

PIMPLES

Yes, just the old drab joke.

BESSEDA

Yes Comrades, they lecture to us that Russia is organized, industrialized, communized—and just because an electric bulb burns out we have to sit here in the darkness at midnight waiting for the supervisor. What waste, when I am ready to work.

[TEREKHINE *enters.*]

ANDREI

Is that you?

TEREKHINE

Yes. It's me.

BESSEDA

At last!

PETROSSIAN

So you've come.

ANDREI

How good of you.

LUTIKOV

Did you strain yourself.

VOZNESIENSKI

There is no hurry you know, it is only midnight.

ANDREI

Well then, shove in the damned bulb.

BEZBORODOV

Yes, shove it in.

LUTIKOV

Go on, hurry up.

BEZBORODOV

You've been a hell of a time—speed—speed.

BESSEDA

Who the devil do you think you are. Don't act like a bourgeois. It is we the students who are of first importance in our Soviet—not the supervisors.

TEREKHINE

You god-damned swine! So you've finally all gone crazy at the same time.

BESSEDA

Who is it?

TEREKHINE

Terekhine! [*Silence.*]

BESSEDA

Oh, we thought it was the supervisor.

PIMPLES

[*Ingratiatingly.*] Good evening Comrade.

TEREKHINE

Why, in the name of that phantom the bourgeois call God, are you sitting in the darkness?

ANDREI

The bulb has burned out.

TEREKHINE

And I'm so tired I can hardly stand. What a day's work I put in today. We are here trying to make the machinery of production revolve, and the peasants are at their old tricks of hoarding grain. They gave me the job of organizing one section of them. I put the fear of the party into them, I squeezed two thousand bushels from between their toes. I'd like to stand them all up

against the wall. God I'm tired. [*Attempts to sit on a bunk.*]

LUTIKOV

Look out! You're sitting on me—damn you, you are covered with burrs. What a bull you are.

TEREKHINE

Here you are, somebody. Here's a piece of candle. Light up.

BESSEDA

[*Succeeds in snatching the candle—makes a light.*] Ah, now I can work again. [*Crawls near the candle with his book.*]

VOZNESIENSKI

You're late. Did you go anywhere after you returned to Moscow?

TEREKHINE

I spent a little time at the wheat Trust—they have put me on the Internal Propaganda committee. I will have to lecture now too. Then I legged it all over Moscow—looking for a room, Voznesienski.

ANDREI

Why?

TEREKHINE

Because if you must know I am too overcome with the pleasure of sharing one room with all of you!

ANDREI

Oh, thank you.

VOZNESIENSKI

That's very complimentary.

LUTIKOV

That's true communism for you.

PETROSSIAN

You don't say so.

BEZBORODOV

Same to you.

TEREKHINE

Three years, Voznesienski! And during that time there have never been less than eight in here. Last year there were twenty of us living in this room! No sleep, and impossible to work—Bah! Did I say living together? I should say, dying together. Comrades— I've decided to get married.

[*Tremendous rolling unified guffaws of laughter.*]

ANDREI

Married? When you marry, the cocks of the barnyard will walk into church, with hens on their wings.

TEREKHINE

I said—married!

ANDREI

And the unhappy lady?

TEREKHINE

You're a fine sample of a jackass whoever asked that. If there were light here I'd spit in your eye.

BEZBORODOV

Let darkness reign eternal.

TEREKHINE

Listen to me you bastards. This time I may be in earnest. The happy lady is Nina Verganskaia.

ANDREI

Comrades, let us rise to our feet and bow our heads in honor of the unfortunate girl! [*Everyone applauds.*]

PIOTR

[*Low.*] You Comrades can joke about it, but I can't. Do you mean it, Terekhine? It makes sweat beads stand out on my head.

LUTIKOV

What's that. Come on Piotr, tell us about it.

PIOTR

Marriage requires such courage. Aren't you afraid?

TEREKHINE

[*Laughs aloud.*] Look at the block-head all ruffled. No, excuse me, a block of wood contains grain, but your head is empty. You damned idiot, do you think I have to marry a woman to get somebody to sleep with? I'm not a pale-faced bourgeois. I'm just going to live with a woman so that I can get a room to myself—while the rest of you stew in each other's sweat.

PIOTR

Leave it alone, Terekhine, my boy. I've tried it, I know, I shall never forget the experience.

TEREKHINE

What do you mean giving me advice?

PIOTR

What do I mean? Why you've only to look around you and you'll find explanation enough. In the old days there was something they called Love. [*There are groans in the darkness.*] I know, Comrades. [*With a sarcastic hurt.*] We can leave that to novels and poems. We can push aside that companion and friend theory. Life is not like that. I know, I know, but oh damn it all—

LUTIKOV

Come down to earth. Speak more clearly. What did your experience expound to you, Piotr?

[*All laugh.*]

PIOTR

This; that for the first week or two, when you've the woman all to yourself everything is beautifully rosy. But then there's the afterwards. Nina Verganskaia is a fine girl. What are you going to do about the afterwards, Terekhine?

TEREKHINE

Are you offering *me*—old fashioned rules of virtuous conduct?

PIOTR

Yes I am. When one gets used to the same face day

after day. The quarrels which start from nothing and end in nothing, [TEREKHINE *lights a match and cigarette*] or worse than nothing. To begin again without an hour's lapse. What about the girl to whom you are offering this certainty?

LUTIKOV

The old driveling advice of our grandfathers! I believe the fellow's a bourgeois!

[*There is a* CHORUS OF VOICES *at this word, which is like a red flag to a bull.*]

PIMPLES

What the devil does he mean, a bourgeois?

BEZBORODOV

Ah, ah, that's good!

ANDREI

Who said that?

VOSNESIENSKI

Don't talk damn nonsense!

BESSEDA

That's Lutikov at it again.

} Omnes

PIOTR

You all know damn well I'm not. But can't a Communist be human too?

LUTIKOV

No one has a right to be human here. We must think and talk for the good of the mass.

BESSEDA

Let's listen.

BEZBORODOV

[*Yawns.*]

PETROSSIAN

Lutikov's right.

PIMPLES

Piotr's philosophizing again.

ANDREI

Quiet, Comrades. In other words—shut up! You all of you know that Piotr is right. I can't live long with the same woman. After a little of it a man feels as if he were in prison. Or worse, like a child tied up in a crib. Every woman interferes with a man's work and curses him if he doesn't interfere with hers. The very moment I get really tied up with a woman, all the others seem to me a thousand times more charming than she ever was. I suppose the good Lord's made us like that.

LUTIKOV

Bosh. You have made yourself like that.

PIOTR

You can always separate, you say. The Soviet law has made that easy for us. . . . NO! You can't, especially if there are consequences.

LUTIKOV

Send them to homes.

PIOTR

Is that the way to bring up children?

LUTIKOV

Good enough for any true Communist, the state is his Mother.

PIOTR

Well I would sooner not have any than—

LUTIKOV

That's because you are wavering in your allegiance and—

PIOTR

It's because I won't swallow—

[SIREN *blows—quiet.* BEZBORODOV *has not yet moved—yawns loudly and long from his bed.*]

TEREKHINE

There's only one man who could yawn so successfully. That's Bezborodov. Where is he? I'll trace him by his unwashed odor. [*Goes over to* BEZBORODOV, *kicks him.*] What's the matter with you, Comrade Bezborodov?

BEZBORODOV

Nothing—just boredom. [*Yawns.*]

[TEREKHINE *sprawls on table.*]

TEREKHINE

Keep your God-damned boredom to yourself.

LUTIKOV

Oh go to hell. [*Calming down.*] What do you suggest Piotr.

PIOTR

Nothing at all. People will go on being fools.

VOSNESIENSKI

Yes, because it's the entire sex problem. Something that hurts more than the toothache.

ANDREI

[*Sits on center of table, picks up a book.*] That depends on the individual.

BESSEDA

Take my advice, don't trouble yourselves about it.

VOSNESIENSKI

Does that mean you have solved the sex question for yourself?

BESSEDA

No, Comrades. It means I came here to study, and I don't want to be bothered with your sex problems.

ANDREI

You're a celibate! A learning machine! You've never been in love. [*Mauls* BESSEDA.]

BESSEDA

Yes, I have! But I haven't yapped about it. All your chatter is the result of laziness.

VOSNESIENSKI

Laziness! Don't we work all night and all day?

BESSEDA

You spend your nights trying to work. Your brains suffer too much during the day to let you, so you think and talk nonsense. Your so-called "sex-problem" is the only thing your lazy minds can warm to.

ANDREI

Comrades! At last someone has discovered something!

BESSEDA

I have, but you wouldn't listen to me—it wouldn't have enough sex in it for one o'clock in the morning.

LUTIKOV

We'll listen.

ANDREI

Shoot away, book-worm.

LUTIKOV

Only don't quote from your books Comrade, we'll have enough of that tomorrow.

BESSEDA

All right then listen. I am a peasant. [*Looks up from book.*] In the country we work at the plow, planting and reaping. And when we go home at night we sleep so soundly, that we wouldn't care a damn if the rats came along and ate up your sex problem. Work, study, Comrades!

PIOTR

Work— Study— It is so easy to make a revolution, but to bring one to a full fruition, that has still to be

done in this world. Here we are young, fresh, eager—
What have we done with ourselves?

[*From the room below them, there can be heard the noise of people, singing and shouting and stamping.*]

BESSEDA

Oh if we only had light, light!

[*The noise swells now to the proportions of a drunken row, loud laughter of men and women mix. The noise has awakened* TEREKHINE *who sits up.*]

VOZNESIENSKI

Do they think they can do as they like?

ANDREI

What an ungodly row!

BEZBORODOV

Do they never sleep?

PIMPLES

Merry lot, aren't they?

BESSEDA

If I could only work.

LUTIKOV

Damn their noisy mouths!

OMNES

VOSENSIENSKI

Knock on the floor! Make those devils stop. They think that because they have a light—

TEREKHINE

[*Knocks loudly on the floor and calls out.*] Silence. Shut up!

VOICES BELOW

Go to hell. We are the mass. Go to hell! Individualist!

TEREKHINE

[*Bellowing in terrific anger.*] This is Comrade Terekhine! [*A pall of dead silence.*]

BESSEDA

Tomorrow I have an examination. Another the next day and another next week.

LUTIKOV

And you believe in the proverb; "My neighbor's business is his, not mine."

BESSEDA

Yes, I do. I am isolated. I want to work and I will work and I won't be bothered with your problems, and your talk.

LUTIKOV

You are wrong. When a question persists, as part of the mass we cannot shirk it.

BESSEDA

You all live so unnaturally that you are bound to talk, talk, talk.

ANDREI

Look here. [*Reading from book.*] The man who suffers must cry out.

BEZBORODOV

[*Yawns loudly again.*] Perhaps that is why everybody is shouting so. I yawn instead.

TEREKHINE

I told you to keep quiet. This time I'll make you.

BEZBORODOV

Let me alone, Terekhine, things bore me, that's all.

PIOTR

Let him alone. He's not done any harm.

BESSEDA

He has as much right as anyone to be here—at least he's quiet most of the time.

PIMPLES

Well it adds to the fun of life.

ANDREI

Look out, you're jumping on my feet.

VOSNESIENSKI

Go on fight it out.

OMNES

LUTIKOV

Go on Terekhine—show him he must be careful of his speech.

TEREKHINE

Shut up! all of you.

[*The form is knocked over.* BESSEDA's *candle goes out.*]

BESSEDA

There, now you've even put the candle out. Oh for some light, some light!

[*There is a sound of scuffling, a fight in the darkness, furniture pushed about. There is the sound of a falling body. And then everything is quiet.*]

LUTIKOV

[*After pause.*] What have you done to him, Terekhine?

TEREKHINE

Oh I've not done him much harm. He's been asking for it for weeks. He's too individualistic.

SUPERVISOR

[*Enters center with a dim electric torch.*] What's all this eh? [*He mounts the table in the center and begins to fumble with the electric fitting. His torch goes out before he turns on the lamp. He is speaking all the while.*] Now, Comrades, I tell you once for all this is beyond a joke. This is the last electric bulb I'll give you. And I mean it. I haven't any more. Do you think this is a bulb factory run for your benefit? There's not enough discipline here. You keep the light burning the entire night. You work in shifts—one lot of you until two A. M., the other goes on till dawn. Do you think that will advance the glorious *cause?* There are not

enough bulbs in the whole of Russia for that kind of disorder.

TEREKHINE

You've talked enough, Comrade Supervisor. Turn on the light.

[*The light is switched on and in the same instant as the students raise their hands to shield their eyes from the sudden light, a* TROUP OF PEOPLE *singing the* "International" *pass in the streets.* TEREKHINE *up to top bunk L. The* STUDENTS *make their way to the table and begin studying.*]

BEZBORODOV

Comrades, here is a wonderful thing. In this book it says that republicanism is the most satisfactory form of government— In this book it says that absolute communism is the most satisfactory form of government. But *here,* Comrades, is the *book* of books. Here it says that two times two is four. And Comrades, for weeks I have made the calculation over and over again, and —it is wonderful, Comrades—every time, *every time* —the answer has come out—four!

[*They all look up at him as the curtain slowly falls. The song is still faintly heard in the distance.*]

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE II

A gymnasium in Moscow.

A long wall which extends from one side of the stage to the other. The wall is hung with banners on which are written propagandist slogans. Behind the wall, the Lenin tomb, the Kremlin wall and domes can be seen, as in Scene I. At the right are hung exercising rings, and in the center there is a mat. Extreme right and left there are two benches, and very far forward, center, there are two chairs.

Students are doing various forms of exercises. Both men and women attend the gymnasium. The men wear trunks only, the women knickers and blouses.

The gymnasium is brilliantly lighted. There is faint light on the domes and the Kremlin wall.

ANDREI

Piotr! [PIOTR *jumps, says "Not so good."*] Go on, Vassili! [VASSILI *runs and takes a jump.*] Your turn now, Bezborodov.

BEZBORODOV

I don't think I could do that. I've never been able to jump.

ANDREI

Get back a bit, toe the line.

VASSILI

Of course, you could. [BEZBORODOV *jumps.* FENIA *mocks his action.*] That's not jumping, it's hopping—Come on—follow me—

[VASSILI *makes hand-spring.* BEZBORODOV *tries it but fails badly.* NINA *enters L.*]

BEZBORODOV

Yes—it's easy for you.

ANDREI

Go on, get on with it. What's the matter with you.

VASSILI

Look here, you're wasting time.

LUTIKOV

Lord, what an ass.

PIOTR

Well, have a try.

[*Spoken Together.*]

BEZBORODOV

[*Getting up after his fall and rubbing his shins.*] You see—that's what I always do. [VARVARA *enters.*]

VASSILI

Serves you damn well right.

VARVARA

Hello! Comrade Bezborodov, have you seen Comrade Senkine about?

BEZBORODOV

What do you take me for? A lunatic keeper?

VARVARA

Oh, go and drown yourself. [*The* STUDENTS *laugh and* ANDREI *blows a whistle.*]

ANDREI

Come on, line up. Start off with the left. Sing!

[*The* STUDENTS *march off, singing.*]

NINA

[*Calling.*] It isn't little Varvara, is it?

VARVARA

[*Surprised.*] Nina!—Nina Verganskaia!—Where did you spring from?

[*The* GIRLS *go toward each other.*]

NINA

You in Moscow? It's years since we saw each other. Not since you left Briansk.

VARVARA

[*Nodding her head.*] That's true— Where are you working?

NINA

At the Sverdlov University. And you?

VARVARA

Yes, little Nina, I'm studying too.

NINA

How did you escape?

VARVARA

You know, I was in that factory at Bonkharine. They wouldn't let me go. So I pushed my way into the Superintendent's room. "Look here, Comrade Vlassov," I said, "I've been working here for three years." "Yes and damned well, too!" he said. "Oh," I said, "Well, did you tell them yesterday that you had decided not to let me go and study?" "I did," he said, "we are short of workers like you." Then what do you think I did? [NINA *shakes her head.*] Well, I looked him straight in the face and I said: "Comrade Vlassov, I have started to have cholera!"

NINA

Cholera!

VARVARA

"Cholera!" he yelled and before he could speak I walked away from him cramped with pain— And my dear, the next day I was on my way to Moscow! How did you manage your escape?

NINA

They sent me of their own accord

VARVARA

You *must* have brains. Where were you working.

NINA

At Tchernigov.

VARVARA

How are your people? How's your father and your

mother, how's your little sister? Does your father still go on tooth pulling?

NINA

Yes, it's much the same with them. They belong to the old gang. They still worry about my communism —and I still worry about my bourgeois background. How happy I am that I broke from them—that I had the courage to embrace our new faith—it wasn't easy for me—to leave them, to leave my past—but it was so glorious those first days—I felt so full—so alive—

VARVARA

I suppose you are just as wide awake as ever? Remember how they used to call us the two black reds?

NINA

Ah, Varvara, how thrilling our work was.

VARVARA

Remember when you walked into the mass meetings, how the men always yelled, "Kick out that skirt, we don't want to listen to any petticoats"—and then you'd smile—begin—then they'd applaud and prefer listening to you than the commissars.

NINA

[*Breaking in.*] Oh, I forgot—how is Ivan?

VARVARA

Ivan? We separated.

NINA

Why? He was a splendid chap.

VARVARA

Yes, he is still, but too intelligent. It got so, he entirely stopped discussing things with me because I always thought as he did—I always agreed with him—I had to— He was always right— At last I realized that I was becoming a mere housekeeper— So in self-defense I left him—

[*First formation comes in lock-step.*]

NINA

And now?

VARVARA

I suppose there are others.

NINA

Oh, Varvara—I could never feel like that— You can't have loved Ivan and left him so easily— There are many trivial things in life— Love isn't one of them.

VARVARA

Sentimentalist!

NINA

Oh, look, Varvara, there are the exercises our cell is doing for the 10th Anniversary.

ANDREI

[*Leading group across stage.*] More like '61—come on —slaves—groan—come on you bastards—groan!

VARVARA

Aw—well, anyway I'm a bachelor now—

NINA

And I am married, Varvara.

VARVARA

You!

NINA

Yes, I— Oh, it's so good if one can have one's love completely absorbed by one human being. It must be possible—it must be.

VARVARA

Nina! Who is your husband? Tell me about him.

NINA

His name is Terekhine. Constantine Terekhine.

VARVARA

But who is he? Tell me quickly.

NINA

He has been a member of the party since 1917! Imagine!—and he is still young. He's a laborer. He is on the Committee of the cell. A powerful speaker. The Commission of Wheat uses him on all sorts of difficult work. Now he's on Internal Propaganda as well. He will go far in politics.

VARVARA

Oh, but that is fine. But you, do you live well, are you happy?

NINA

[*After a slight pause.*] Yes! So you are a laboring student—do you like it?

VARVARA

Not bad. Nina, you don't tell me anything about your husband! Where is he—let me see him.

NINA

What can I tell you? He's over there. [*Points off R.*] He'll speak for himself. [*Calling.*] Constantine! Constantine!

TEREKHINE

[*Off stage R.*] Well, what the devil do you want? [*Enters.*]

NINA

This is Varvara. I have often told you about her.

TEREKHINE

[*Cutting a dash.*] Varvara! So you are Varvara? Good! As you seem to still be alive I might as well ask how you are?

VARVARA

How are you, boy? [To NINA.] So that's the kind of husband you have found?

TEREKHINE

Husband! Do you think I am that kind of fool, eh? —I am not, and I hope I never shall be a husband. The word is detestable, it stinks of the old middle-class.

[ANDREI *blows a whistle off L.*]

VARVARA

[*Casually to* TEREKHINE.] I suppose you are her lover.

TEREKHINE

No, not even that. She happens to live with me, that's all. You've not been sent by one of those bourgeois morality agents to try and get us to register, have you?

NINA

Constantine?

TEREKHINE

Yes! That's the name they baptized me with. Bah! Go on chatting to your girl friend.

[TEREKHINE *takes off his coat—begins his exercises on rings.*]

VARVARA

[*Putting her arm around* NINA.] He's not very friendly.

NINA

What do you want of him—gallantry? He's not an involved person— He's a laborer—

[*The* TWO GIRLS *exeunt. 2nd* FORMATION *of* STUDENTS *marches on, in 1905 formation suggesting first liberation across stage and off.*]

TEREKHINE

Bah! I must be growing old!

LENOV

[*Enters, with his head bandaged.* LISA *is behind him.*] Come on, Lisa.

TEREKHINE

Hello, Comrade Lenov.

LENOV

Hello, Comrade Terekhine, I want to introduce you to Lisa—she is—we are—

LISA

"She is—we are—" I'll tell you what I am—I am Lisa Gracova—and that's all—

TEREKHINE

Well, it's very comforting to know that. If I were a bit younger—in other words you've a damn fine wife, Lenov.

LISA

Wife? I'm not his wife!

TEREKHINE

Splendid!

LISA

What a terrible thing to accuse me of. I leave that kind of rubbish to the daughters of the old middle class—who are anxious to get one room married quarters. Not me—I'm free of that kind of dirt.

TEREKHINE

Bravo Lisa— I like you for that.

LISA

All I look for in a man is communistic comradeship —if I happen to spend a night with him, that has nothing to do with it. I'm not a mere female, understand? Where's my cape? [*She gets cape.*]

TEREKHINE

[*Calling after her.*] Bravo. That's good sense. [*To* LENOV.] She quite agrees with our ideas, doesn't she, Lenov?

LENOV

Well—she certainly hasn't many prejudices.

TEREKHINE

I think I'll take her away from you!

LENOV

My God—you won't!

TEREKHINE

I'll bet you twenty bottles of beer that I will take her away from you today.

LENOV

Today? Ha! Ha!

[LISA *enters with cape on.*]

LISA

What's up?

LENOV

Nothing. He's just told me a funny story, that's all.

TEREKHINE

Well, twenty bottles, what do you say?—to be paid before sunrise. Are you afraid?

LENOV

Not a bit—twenty bottles. [*Last formation marches*

on in 1917 revolutionary formation—and breaks up at end of exercise.]

VASSILI

Well, why not? The mass has to be protected from the individual.

PIOTR

I won't believe it.

ANDREI

Yes, if they had any, sure they would —but they haven't—damn them.

LUTIKOV

That's what I've been saying for months —too many students at one time.

BESSEDA

Work, there's not one of you know what it means.

PETROSSIAN

I'd rather not tell anyone what I think.

BEZBORODOV

I don't care, we have to have some rest sometimes.

VOZNESIENSKI

Who cáres—I don't. Shove the women into the men's quarters. Then we'd have some real communism—eh?

[*Spoken Together.*]

PIMPLES

Well, that's it. Nobody ever listens to me.

VOZNESIENSKI

Comrades, you see before you our Lenov, our Pushkin, our troubador. Let's place him upon a pedestal. Besseda, get the pedestal!

VASSILI

Right; make him a president.

PETROSSIAN

Yes, raise him above the mass.

LUTIKOV

Hurry up, before he breaks away for another drink.

PIMPLES

Lord, he's certain to sing one of his beastly songs.

PIOTR

I'm generally stirred when he does.

[*Spoken Together*]

BEZBORODOV

Oh, that will only encourage him to talk.

VOZNESIENSKI

First time Besseda has done any real work.

ANDREI

Always make a fuss of a tame pod.

BESSEDA

All right, there's one just outside.

VOZNESIENSKI

Sit down if you please.

[Besseda *and* Lutikov *lift* Lenov *on pedestal.*]

Terekhine

What have you done to your head?

Lenov

I was in a fight yesterday.

Lutikov

Again?

Lenov

Yes, we had a drinking bout at our beer ball. Fedka got drunk. He caught some flies and put them into the half empty bottles. He called the flies English conservatives. He caught thirteen of them.

Besseda

English conservatives?

Lenov

Then this is what he did— "Are you the Landlord?" "Yes." "Why do you keep English conservatives in bottles? Do you want to poison us? You've got to give us a fresh supply of beer, free. You're drunk"— and he hit him over the head—and all the English conservatives flew out.

Lutikov

Out of the bottle?

Lenov

Well, of course, the bottle broke, too.

Voznesienski

Did you get the extra beer?

LENOV

No, we got kicked out of the beer hall instead.

VOZNESIENSKI

I thought at first you had been having one of those literary discussions with some of your pals.

LENOV

I don't mix myself up with their proletarian squabbles. I don't discuss— I write.

VOZNESIENSKI

Yes, and drink!

LENOV

Why not! You think a poet ought not to drink, eh? Yessenin was a poet and he drank. All poets drink— all the old ones did. It's the only thing that gives us inspiration—especially in these days.

BESSEDA

Why particularly in these days?

LENOV

Because we are going through a gray narrow cowardly period. We are all bored. Our hearts are like dirty rags covered with dust so we are obliged to stimulate our minds. This thing of waiting and of speculation is eating into our souls—we are like lice crowding on a dirty body—all of us trying to get full. It's sickening and so—we drink. [FEDOR *enters.*]

TEREKHINE

What the devil do you mean? Oh drop it, Lenov, and give us some of your verses.

ANDREI
For god's sake don't sing about love.

LUTIKOV
Not a bad idea.

BESSEDA
Sing pretty poet song.

PETROSSIAN
Don't worry—he'll sing whether we want him to or not.
[BEZBORODOV *yawns.*]

VOZNESIENSKI
Come on, this is grand.

PIMPLES
Oh, don't, it's certain to be one of those dull affairs.

PIOTR
Now then, a good old war song.

VASSILI
Yes, and put some go into it.

[*Spoken Together.*]

LENOV
All right— I will. I'll give you one of the old ones.

LUTIKOV
Let's lift him up the way we used to.

LENOV
Let the living live
The festering must die.

The decomposing Capitalists
The hypocritical Romanticists
The fat-bellied bourgeoises
Kill, kill, kill, let them all be killed
To feed the great army of freedom

Omnes

Oura! Ga! Oura! Ga! Oura! Ga! Oura!
The Red is in the sky
Red drenches the earth.
The conquerors of all order,
The skull-breakers of man's laws,
The slayers of the Religions.
Live, live, live, Let the Red ones live
To march with the great army of freedom.

Omnes

Oura! Ga! Oura! Ga! Oura! Ga! Oura!

PIOTR

That's damned fine.

PIMPLES

I say, Lenov, don't you know anything comic?

FEDOR

It makes me sick—kill—kill—kill. It's as old-fashioned as royalty!

PIOTR

What? Isn't it written in blood, Comrade Fedor? Isn't it right? Lenov, it is fine, you put your heart into that. When I think of 1918. We breathed deeply then.

TEREKHINE

[*With fanatic enthusiasm.*] And 1919! I was in command of a regiment at Deinkin—fine fellows all of them. We were shivering with damp and cold. "Comrades," I shouted, "a great honor has befallen us, we are to take Orel!" Then we rode as one man. Our horses and bright swords were too much even for those curs' machine-guns. I at the head of the battalion, you forgot everything, you screamed like a drunkard. The town fell and before sunset there was not an able-bodied white left alive in Orel. Next morning the sun was shining, we paraded, and girls wearing white dresses threw flowers under our feet! Music playing—singing! They had all come over to us Reds. They were part of Young Russia! Yes, those were the days. That was real revolution.

FEDOR

And now?

TEREKHINE

Now it's all flabby. A world run for such men as you. You make revolutions upon bits of paper while you drink the coffee your mamma boiled for you—

FEDOR

You won't draw me. I don't intend to brag against you. You shout about intellectualism and yet that speech of yours just now was an example of the worst kind of so-called intellectualism.

TEREKHINE

Don't you preach at me, you swine.

ALL

Stop it! Don't fight!

TEREKHINE

Do you think I don't know all your sloppy theories? I tell you a true revolutionary is one who never gives in. He fights as hard at home as he did at the front.

VOZNESIENSKI

Well, Comrade Terekhine, aren't we all doing that? We're making progress—

PIOTR

Rot. You're not at a public meeting now, Voznesienski.

PIMPLES

Terekhine is right. We should use all our strength. We ought to march on Poland. To win or die.

ANDREI

Would you fight too, Pimples?

PIMPLES

Of course.

ANDREI

Well, don't forget to take all your books and papers into battle with you. [*Knocks* PIMPLES' *papers out of his hand.*]

LENOV

Yes. You can all damn well laugh. I don't go to meetings in these days. They disgust me too much. Whom do we find there, eh? Business men, employees, bankers and financiers. And what do they do, eh? Nothing

but boast about their profits. About advancing their positions. Most of the filths can only talk in terms of Kopecks—they go there under the guise of Economy! Thanks to them the whole revolution is becoming a matter of Kopecks. Blast it, when one realizes that—one has to drink.

[NINA *and* VARVARA *enter.*]

VASSILI

I see you show courage by the number of bottles you have 'round you. When you're sober you write this bloody poetry—it's stupid—

LENOV

Yes, that's the way we show our contempt for the speech-makers and wait for another revolution against this new-fangled economic movement, which is filling our shop windows with luxuries and our streets with beggars, all over again. The only thing to keep one sane and loyal—is drink!

PIMPLES

May I speak? All this only proves—

VASSILI

You shut up—see?

LISA

Oh, my Lord.

FEDOR

Comrades, what Lenov said is true—I shall tell you how I am going to start to remedy this vile situation. I shall vote against Terekhine, and what he represents.

TEREKHINE

Oh, you will, will you? You Careerist!

VASSILI

What damned nonsense. Careerist!

PIOTR

Now there's going to be a row.

PIMPLES

Anyway, I shall vote for Terekhine.

PETROSSIAN

What committee is he talking about?

BESSEDA

Damned if I'd stand him called a—Careerist!

LUTIKOV

That's pretty strong, Terekhine.

ANDREI

Fedor a Careerist, ah!

[*Spoken Together.*]

TEREKHINE

I've known for a long time. You want to get on the Committee yourself.

FEDOR

I—a Careerist! No, Comrade, you can't get out of your dilemma so easily. It is not I who lord it over my Comrades. It is you to whom some modicum of power has been given who are bringing back the evils of the bourgeoisie. You who wear upon your breast

—not arrogant royalist eagles—but worse—screaming red stars to frighten weaker Comrades with!

[TEREKHINE *makes a pass at* FEDOR. OTHERS *pull him back.*]

LUTIKOV

[*Comes between them.*] We've had enough of this, Comrades.

FEDOR

I'm not going to let that pass.

VOZNESIENSKI

Oh, stop it. You won't get anywhere by quarreling.

TEREKHINE

A swine like that trying to teach me a lesson. [*To* FEDOR.] Do you know where you were when I was organizing my first conspirators' clubs—doing underground work for the revolution? You were a pupil at a school for which your father paid.

PIOTR

Let him alone, Terekhine.

TEREKHINE

Tell him to let me alone then. Comrade Fedor, I know everything about you.

FEDOR

What do you know?

TEREKHINE

I know why you are going to vote against my pro-

motion on the Committee. I know why you are telling lies about me. You are in love with Nina Verganskaia.

NINA

[*Coming forward.*] Constantine!

TEREKHINE

You go for walks with her and try to worm things out of her about me.

NINA

Constantine!

TEREKHINE

But I warn you now, Fedor. [NINA *and* VARVARA *exeunt.*] Take care—if you interfere too much with me I'll smash every bone in your body till your mother won't know you.

FEDOR

Keep your bullying for women, Comrade! It might frighten them. It is crushing one fine one.

[LISA *laughs.*]

TEREKHINE

Do I frighten you Lisa?

LISA

Don't I look it! Tell me—how can a real red-blooded man live forever with the same woman?

TEREKHINE

And you, Lisa?

LISA

Why stint oneself! We only live once.

TEREKHINE

Right! We only live once.

LISA

My throat gets dry and my teeth need exercise—well then—I've got to get eat and drink!

TEREKHINE

Let's go over to my room, Lisa.

LISA

[*Tantalizing him.*] And your dear wife—Nina?

TEREKHINE

To hell with her.

LISA

Spoken like a man. Look at that gang of shy weaklings. Our life is too strong for them. Look at them—they look ready to cry. So long Ninnies! [*She turns* to LENOV *and, improvising, sings*—] "So long little boy. I won't be home tonight—my aunt's come to take me to the country." [*She laughs and* TEREKHINE *goes to her and tries to lift her.*] I fight my own battles and take my own pleasures. Come on!

TEREKHINE

[*Takes her arm as she laughs boisterously—and speaks in a jeering voice to* LENOV.] Twenty bottles! Eh, Comrade Lenov? Ha! Ha! [*They go off left, pushing* PIOTR *out of way.*]

VOZNESIENSKI

Well, that's over.

ANDREI

Back to the old tread-mill.

BESSEDA

We shall be late, Commander, hurry up. I particularly don't want to miss the class on hyperbolas.

PIMPLES

And I've only just began to enjoy myself.

[*Spoken Together.*]

ANDREI

Line up, Comrades.

PIOTR

It makes you want to howl like wolves and to destroy all these accursed people. We had humanity's destiny in our hands and we turned it into personal lust and greed—and our dream of a unified mass? We're a frightened pack of fools—

[*Siren.*]

ANDREI

Line up—

LENOV

Come and have a drink, Piotr!

[LENOV *and* PIOTR, *exeunt.* FEDOR *is left alone on*

the stage. By now all the STUDENTS *in rear line have lined up and march off singing* "Arise Ye Children of Starvation!"]

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE III

TEREKHINE *and* NINA'S *room in a Student's House. There are two beds, each parallel and against a side wall. At the center of the back wall is a door. Down right is a plain writing table, and down left, an old battered trunk. A single chair comprises the only other furniture in the room. There are one or two shabby smocks and dresses hanging in a corner, and a few pieces of soiled linen about.*

The light is concentrated on the front part of the room. The background is the same as the preceding scenes, with a glow of light on the Kremlin domes, and the little temple which surmounts the Lenin tomb.

NINA *is seated at the table writing.* TEREKHINE *enters quietly, and stands in the doorway a moment before he speaks.*

TEREKHINE

Bah.

NINA

Constantine! You frightened me.

TEREKHINE

I wonder you don't frighten yourself writing that muck.

NINA

You oughtn't to spy on me.

TEREKHINE

Bosh. I read all that silly nonsense long ago.

NINA

Constantine, you didn't?

TEREKHINE

I read it while you were away. Why did you leave it about?

NINA

I didn't. I locked it up.

TEREKHINE

Yes, in your trunk. A lot of good that lock is. I hadn't time to read right through your magnum opus. There seem to be one or two interesting passages, especially at the beginning about me. But on the whole it's very middle-class.

NINA

Middle-class?

TEREKHINE

Why even the idea of keeping a diary is middle-class.

NINA

Can't you find a new name—you call everything except yourself middle-class.

TEREKHINE

Do you want to pick a quarrel with me? Is there a clean shirt left?

NINA

No, the washing is not back yet.

TEREKHINE

Why?

NINA

Because I've not had time to go for it. The washerwoman of this quarter lives two and a half miles away.

TEREKHINE

It's always the same story. What's the good of you?

NINA

I tell you I've not had time to go to the washerwoman.

TEREKHINE

You manage to find time to go for long walks with Fedor.

NINA

What?

TEREKHINE

Yes. Why don't you take him for a walk to the washerwoman and get my shirt? All you do here is weep and whine. [*Imitates* NINA's *voice.*] "I love you and you don't love me." So you are making sure of another chap, I suppose.

NINA

Why are you so fond of torturing me? Because it is torture.

TEREKHINE

At it again! For God's sake be quiet. Every Comrade in the house will hear you.

NINA

But why are you always like this?

TEREKHINE

Look here, Little Nina—quiet down. [*Kisses her.*] Here we are quarreling again—and over such a trifle.

NINA

Can't you understand? It isn't a trifle to me, Constantine. I don't count in your life. I am worn out and you have shown me that you no longer want me. I'm frightened of everything— I'm so tired. Anything I say always seems to be wrong.

TEREKHINE

Well, you can't blame me for that.

NINA

Perhaps not. But your everlasting unkindness has been the cause of it. The Comrades are noticing it, especially the women.

TEREKHINE

That's because you talk so much and because you show a broken heart in the place where your face ought to be.

NINA

You see. You can't even speak kindly to me for more than a moment.

TEREKHINE

Bah! I'm sick of all this. You know what your trouble is—you're afraid of the truth and so you complicate everything—you turn life into a Chinese puzzle and I'm not used to that kind of thing, damn it. I want truth—outright truth.

NINA

Do you speak the truth when you say that I tell the Comrades how we live, you and I?

TEREKHINE

Yes. I know you have been talking to Varvara and to that smug-faced saint, Fedor. And in the Community they'll soon be saying, "Terekhine behaves like a swine to Nina." You have only to give the suggestion of a topic to that drove of sheep and they begin to bleat. They'll start listening and spying and bursting suddenly into the room. [*As he says this* PIMPLES *throws open door C. Comes in.*] There you are—

PIMPLES

Constantine, I want to see you.

TEREKHINE

What is it? [*To* NINA.] Nina, I'm dying of thirst—get me a bottle of beer—that's a good girl.

[NINA *goes out of the room.*]

PIMPLES

Constantine. In the supervisor's room there's a woman asking for you. . . .

TEREKHINE

[*Interrupting.*] What do you want—and why the devil did you break in here without knocking? [TEREKHINE *slaps* PIMPLES' *face.*]

PIMPLES

[*Cowed.*] I'm sorry, Constantine—I thought you were alone. But there's a peasant woman come to see you. She has a child, a boy, with her.

TEREKHINE

Shut up you, blockhead! Now stop shouting. What does she want?

PIMPLES

[*In very subdued voice almost whispering.*] She says she's your wife and that she insists on seeing you.

TEREKHINE

The devil she does! [*To* PIMPLES.] Did anyone else see her?

PIMPLES

No. Just by chance I heard her talking to the supervisor.

TEREKHINE

Where is she? Oh, she's chosen a damned good moment, hasn't she?

PIMPLES

She's in the entrance lodge. I gave the supervisor a rouble and told him to keep his mouth shut. Then I informed her that you were out and that I would let

her know the moment you came back, because your room was locked.

TEREKHINE

Look here, Pimples, I've thought of getting some advancement for you this year.

PIMPLES

Thank you, Constantine.

TEREKHINE

Now it's as good as done. Do me a favor. [*Unlocks and opens door.*] Run downstairs. Don't let that woman move from the lodge. She's quite capable of making a hell of a scene. In a few minutes I'll get rid of Nina and then you can bring her up—but without the boy—tell her that no children are allowed in the house. She won't know any better.

PIMPLES

All right. Don't worry.

TEREKHINE

Not a word to anyone, if you want that advancement.

PIMPLES

I quite understand, Constantine.

[NINA *re-enters, passing* PIMPLES]

TEREKHINE

Listening, eh?

NINA

Constantine! I brought you a sandwich—

[PIMPLES *exits.*]

TEREKHINE

Well, you would have only heard about a special meeting which is to take place at the office today. Zavialov sent Pimples round with this. [*He takes an official envelope from his pocket.*]

NINA

You seem upset, is anything the matter?

TEREKHINE

What should be the matter? No, I only want to be left alone to work tonight.

NINA

There's something the matter with me.

TEREKHINE

Yes, a bad attack of whining.

NINA

No, Constantine. I have to tell you—I'm pregnant! [*She hesitates and* TEREKHINE *looks at her quickly.*]

TEREKHINE

[*Rises.*] What? Oh, God damn it!

NINA

Constantine. Do you really want me not to?

TEREKHINE

Just as you like. You know my views. It's nothing to do with me. I can't give you any advice.

NINA

What? But it's yours, Constantine. You'll be its father.

TEREKHINE

Don't shout. Why the devil must you shout everything? The child's not mine yet.

NINA

You tell me to do just as I like. But—I can't go on when you're like this. You will only keep on saying over and over again that a child will tie us both down —will interfere with our work for the mass, that he will hinder your development.

TEREKHINE

Every word of which is true.

NINA

[*Over to him.*] My dear, I want a child—your child. Don't you want a little boy who would have your eyes? How happy we could be with him!

TEREKHINE

Stop talking that sentimental twaddle. You can do just as you like. If you think it possible to bring up a child in surroundings like this—I don't. [TEREKHINE *scans his speech as he walks about.*]

NINA

You're not only a brute, you're a coward too, Constantine.

TEREKHINE

I'm not. You know as well as I do that everyone does it. You have only to go before the Commissioners and ask for a permit. Tell them our social position makes a child undesirable or better still that you are in your last term at the Sverdlov University and they can't refuse you, that is the law—then you can go into hospital—this evening if you like. We've got to make sacrifices for the mass—

NINA

[*With a cry of despair.*] It's all very simple, isn't it. How very simple for you to say—sacrifice this child to the mass—or that if I do bring a child into the world it will not be for its own joy, but to serve the mass which doesn't care a particle about it. If the mass thinks and feels the way you do about it, then— Damn the mass!

TEREKHINE

You—

[NINA *cringes.*]

NINA

All right, I'll do it. [*With a sob.*] Oh, if only I could. . . . [NINA *goes towards the door which is opened by* PIMPLES. *He sees* NINA *and closes it again.* OLGA *comes in first,* PIMPLES *stays outside.*]

OLGA

[*Comes in*—PIMPLES *follows.*] Constantine!

NINA

Who are you?

TEREKHINE

[*Before* OLGA *can speak.*] Oh—this is my sister.

OLGA

[PIMPLES *shoves her in chair.*] What!

TEREKHINE

Go along, Nina—I have to talk to her.

OLGA

Your sister? Me? I'll—

TEREKHINE

[*Crossing to* NINA.] Go along, Nina.

[PIMPLES *puts his hand over* OLGA's *mouth.* NINA *looks first at* OLGA, *then at* TEREKHINE, *she then walks deliberately out.*]

TEREKHINE

[*To* PIMPLES.] Get out.

[*Exit* PIMPLES. OLGA *is a round-faced buxom peasant woman. She is coarse in her speech.*]

OLGA

Who's that ugly little thing?

TEREKHINE

Don't shout, Olga. Speak lower. The Comrades are

working all round us. I don't want them to know all my business.

OLGA

You seem to have forgotten how to greet your wife, Comrade Terekhine! We don't meet every day, do we?

TEREKHINE

How are you, Olga? [*He kisses her.*]

OLGA

Aren't you going down to kiss your son. He's in the lodge. He has almost forgotten that he has a daddy.

TEREKHINE

Not now. [*Looking at her pensively.*] So you are Olga?

OLGA

Yes, I'm Olga—and I have come to live with you, Constantine. I have no money. Our grandfather is dead and our grandmother says she's had enough of me and that she has plenty of grandchildren without me and the boy. She said, "You go along to your husband and make him take care of you both."

TEREKHINE

[*With a laugh.*] She said all that, did she?

OLGA

Yes, and we have just arrived, Constantine. When I found myself alone with the child in the Moscow streets, my head just went round and round and I said to him, "How shall we find our daddy, Nikolas," and he—

TEREKHINE

All right—all right—but you can't live here. You must clear out at once. Don't worry about money. As soon as I get any I'll send it to you. You can live just as you please, anywhere. You understand—anywhere—but not here.

OLGA

[*Nonplussed.*] Why can't I live here? [*Looking at him.*] What is it?

TEREKHINE

Wives are forbidden in this building and children, too.

OLGA

What do you mean? These are married quarters. I know that much. And what do these womans' clothes mean? If you can't live with your wife—how is it you have another woman sleeping here? You think because I'm an uneducated peasant woman I can be treated just as you like. [*Shouting.*] But you won't make a fool of me.

TEREKHINE

Don't shout. If you go on shouting, I won't answer you.

OLGA

[*Rocking to and fro.*] Won't you? Well, you can listen to what I have to say. It's too much to expect a woman to bear everything alone. While I'm feeding and clothing the child you are mixing yourself up with prostitutes.

TEREKHINE

Stop that— [*He goes toward her.*]

OLGA

[*Rises.*] Don't think I'm afraid of being beaten! You used to do that all the time in the village. Well, I'd rather be beaten than laughed at. When I cross the road the women call out at me; "Where's your Constantine gone off to? When he was here he wanted you, but in Moscow he gets others"—and they laugh at me. Our marriage was registered. I have a right to be here. [*Sits on chair.*] I'm going to stay.

TEREKHINE

By God, you are not. Under our Soviet law nobody can be forced to live with anyone else. If you keep on I will divorce you without your consent. I know plenty about you, you know. Your brother was a white—he fought against the Red army— [OLGA *stops rocking*] he is living out of Russia and because of that you too can be deported—that's the law!

OLGA

How am I responsible for my brother?

TEREKHINE

Who is responsible—it's all one family?—If you don't listen to me, you'll go to Siberia and your Nikolas will be sent to a child's colony. Didn't your father believe in God? Why, you'll rot in the Salt mines for that.

[OLGA *is panic-stricken.*]

OLGA

Oh, my God! [*She crosses herself.*]

TEREKHINE

What you, too?

OLGA

Excuse me, Kostya—it just slipped. I didn't mean it.

TEREKHINE

Hasn't that old bitch of a grandmother of yours two cows, instead of the one the law allows? Didn't she buy one from a neighbor whose crop failed—why, Olga, they shoot people for having relatives like that. If you don't listen to me—I will be powerless to help you. Do you know what all this means? I can see Nikolas in a child's colony.

OLGA

In a colony?

TEREKHINE

Yes, he'll be given a few boxes of matches and then he'll be turned loose on the streets to earn his own living.

OLGA

[*Gets on her knees.*] But he's only five years old, Terekhine.

TEREKHINE

You can see hundreds of them about the streets just that age. He'll sleep in any tumbled down shed winter and summer—then he'll die of disease—and his body will be taken to the waste-land in a refuse cart. They all die before they are fifteen—boys and girls.

OLGA

[*Rises.*] You devil!

TEREKHINE

Hush! Be reasonable. Go back and sleep 'round the stove with the rest of your family.

OLGA

Constantine, I've been waiting and waiting for you, and now that I come to you—you threaten me with all this and my boy— [*She hides her face in her hands.*]

TEREKHINE

Why are you crying—I'm not abandoning you? I'm not refusing you money. Go back to our village and when I have finished my studies and have started engineering I'll come back home sometimes. Just now it's impossible.

OLGA

[*Points to* NINA's *clothes.*] Why do you live with her and not with your legitimate wife?

TEREKHINE

[*Rises, goes to her.*] Now then, Olga, don't start all that over again. You needn't think I live with her because I love her. No, it's to get a room to myself. All the time I am thinking of you.

OLGA

Is that true? But you never even write to me.

TEREKHINE

Letters have nothing to do with it.

OLGA

But, Constantine!

TEREKHINE

Hush! [*Goes to door and listens.*] No—it's nothing. [*Comes down again.*] Remember you are in Moscow and your family was White—your father believed in God—your uncle was a private baker—and your grandmother has two cows right now—my blood curdles when I think in what danger you are, here.

OLGA

[*Cringes.*] Constantine! Don't frighten me any more, I will go. I must go.

TEREKHINE

That's right.

OLGA

Do you want to divorce me?

TEREKHINE

No, of course not. You go back to the village and wait for me. I will send you money and a present for Nikolas.

OLGA

Constantine, haven't you a little money you can give me now? I haven't enough for the journey back.

TEREKHINE

Isn't that a shame! [*Feels in trousers pockets.*] I haven't any cash at the moment. Wait. [*He goes to coat on bed.*] Nothing. [*Looks around, sees one of* NINA'S

dresses on wall.] Wait! [*Takes some money from the pocket of the skirt—counts coins.*] Five—ten—fifteen —sixteen—seventeen—nineteen. Here, Olga, nineteen kopeks.

OLGA

That won't be enough to pay the fares the whole way.

TEREKHINE

Well, I suppose you'll have to tramp half the way—you're a strong woman, it'll do you good. You'll sleep well when you get home.

OLGA

I sleep pretty good now.

TEREKHINE

Well, anyway I'm afraid you'll have to tramp the rest of the way. Now you'll have to go. [*Picks up speech.*] Look! I have to finish this speech for tonight's meeting.

OLGA

It was good when you, I and baby Nikolas were all in the village.

TEREKHINE

[*Takes her to door.*] Yes, but now you must be going. I can't go with you. I wish I had someone to send. [*He opens door and slaps* PIMPLES' *face on finding him listening.*] You worm.

PIMPLES

Constantine, I was waiting—

TEREKHINE

Well, next time I find you waiting I'll smash your face in—see! Here, take this woman and put her on the tram for the station, pay her fare too. Do you understand?

PIMPLES

Yes, Constantine.

TEREKHINE

Olga. Now go! We'll meet soon. But go now. Remember me to Nikolas—wait! Here—here's half a sandwich. [*Kisses her brow.*] Now go! [TEREKHINE *turns her round and gently but firmly pushes her to the door.*] Olga! Good-bye! [*Shoves her out.*]

OLGA

[*Off.*] Terekhine.

[*They go off and* TEREKHINE *slams the door after them. He then walks slowly down the center of the stage and, standing close to the footlights, he looks up at the papers in his hand. Then he looks up. Though in reality he is only rehearsing his speech, he seems to be addressing the audience of the theatre.*]

TEREKHINE

Comrades, what is it we want? What is it you want? You— [*he points*] and you—[*he points*] and you—[*points*] all of you. You want the Millenium. You want the time to come when none of this old-fashioned bourgeois invention called Morality exists. You want the time to come when the man-made laws have disap-

peared from the world—when you will have mass life as well as mass production— [*Goes back to table as he speaks—gets the bottle of beer and the sandwich—comes forward again.*] You want not only a scientific method of materialization—you want a true doctrine of free will to govern us all— [*Takes a bite of the sandwich—speaks through a full mouth.*] For whom am I working—for myself? No, for you, my friends and Comrades—for you who are the mass and who must win your place as the supreme expression of the majesty of man. [*He takes a swig of beer, continues.*] Now Comrades—let us sing the International! [*He takes another bite of sandwich and begins singing with his full mouth and leading the multitude with the beer bottle.*] Arise, Ye Children of Starvation—

SLOW CURTAIN

Act Two

ACT TWO

SCENE I

The Red Square in Moscow.

The entire Lenin monument can be seen now. There are four concrete benches placed symmetrically in the square in front of the tomb. Directly over the tomb hangs a loud-speaker. It plays continually during the entire scene. At the rise it is playing an old Russian composition.

There is no light on the domes or Kremlin wall, but the monument is brilliantly lighted, and the little temple at the top of it glows with light.

An OLD WOMAN *is seated on a bench. Another* OLD WOMAN *enters and sits beside her.*

FIRST OLD WOMAN

I just saw Papa Lenin's body again yesterday. They say it is kept on ice all the time, to keep it from melting.

SECOND OLD WOMAN

You know, they say it isn't really his body but a wax dummy, that the real one decayed, long ago. [FIRST PASSERBY *enters and sits on a bench. He takes out his lunch and begins to eat it.*]

First Old Woman

Somebody told me—God knows I don't want to believe it, that there is a refrigerating plant where his stomach used to be—and he died for us, and they do that to him. Oh, if he were only alive today! [*She weeps.*]

[Second Passerby *enters.*]

Second Old Woman

Our Papa Lenin—I love to go to see his body—I get such a good cry there. [*She weeps also.*]

First Old Woman

Me too.

First Passerby

They have them in nearly every public square now—This is a new one. We've only just got it.

Second Passerby

A new what?

First Passerby

A new radio loud speaker.

Second Passerby

Yes, they save me a lot of money—I never go to a concert now.

First Passerby

But they have to be careful when they give messages to the mass. It seems that many of the fat-headed bourgeois countries can hear what is said.

SECOND PASSERBY

Hush! [*Looks round*]

FIRST PASSERBY

Why hush?

SECOND PASSERBY

Be careful. Someone might overhear you, and you know how it is; everybody is a self-styled Government spy.

[THIRD PASSERBY *enters.*]

THIRD PASSERBY

Hullo, Comrade! Great success, isn't it?

SECOND PASSERBY

Yes, Comrade, we were just saying the same thing.

THIRD PASSERBY

It's easy enough to rig up a wireless set for yourself if you know how.

FIRST PASSERBY

Really—how's it done?

SECOND PASSERBY

What do you mean?

[*Spoken Together.*]

THIRD PASSERBY

Quite simple. Go round the rubbish heaps near a factory and find some wire. Then get an old zinc bucket and put a telephone receiver into it. Attach the whole lot together and there you are. I have just made a set in twenty minutes.

SECOND PASSERBY

Does yours work well?

THIRD PASSERBY

No—it doesn't work at all. Say, will you give me a roll?

[*A youth enters. He is struck with awe before the radio. At the same moment a* BEGGAR *enters from off right, his voice is heard before he is seen. His cries are recorded below. At the same moment a* PEDDLER *selling hot meat cakes enters calling his wares. These* THREE PEOPLE *speak all at once making a chorus of antiphonal aspects.*]

YOUTH

[*So wrapt he does not hear or see beggar.*] Oh how glorious, Comrades, music in the streets all for us—we who were slaves of the capitalists—now we are swimming happily in the mass ocean—celestial mass music playing about us—the capitals of the world playing for us. [THIRD PASSERBY *steals bread from* FIRST PASSERBY *then goes to* SECOND PASSERBY *and attempts to trade bread for roll—is unsuccessful—exits.*] Ah how unfortunate are the people of the capitalistic countries—we must help them to be free as well. We will make world revolution to music—to mass music. Wonderful! How wonderful! [*Exit.*]

BEGGAR

Hungry, hungry, hungry. I am hungry, citizens. In the name of the mass, give me a kopek to buy bread—

bread—only bread, Comrades—a piece of bread—hungry—hungry—

PEDDLER

[*Enters from R.*] Hot meat cakes—Comrades—ten kopeks for fresh cow-meat cakes—fried in fresh pig grease—hot meat cakes—ten kopeks Comrades.

[*The* BEGGAR *goes up to the* PEDDLER—*holds out his hand, the* PEDDLER *lets fly a kick at him, but neither of them stop the conversation.* PEDDLER *appeals to the two* PASSERSBY—*holds out his hand to them.* FEDOR *enters left, reading a newspaper. Sits on a bench.*]

FIRST PASSERBY

No, Comrade, I haven't anything to spare.

SECOND PASSERBY

Nor I. Go back to the country if you can't earn a living here. The swine won't stay home and grow grain, they come here and expect us to support them. [*The* BEGGAR *goes off.*]

SECOND OLD WOMAN

I can't stand it. Comrade, I feel as though I want to walk until I come to the open country. But I'm not strong enough for that.

FIRST OLD WOMAN

What can't *you* stand? What is it?

SECOND OLD WOMAN

That wireless thing they call radio. I have been living in my room for twenty-six years, and now they

have to put up that thing just outside my window. It plays, it talks and it shrieks all day and all night. Think! All day and all night!

[PASSERBY *exits.*]

FIRST OLD WOMAN

Perhaps you'll get used to it.

SECOND OLD WOMAN

Never! I can't sleep and I can't eat and now my cat has run away. Yesterday the thing shouted for three hours a lecture about the sex problem. Then it stopped.

[NINA *enters.*]

FIRST OLD WOMAN

So you do get a little rest.

SECOND OLD WOMAN

[*Rises.*] Wait! Hardly had I put on the samovar when it began to shout another lecture—about the breeding of pigs! No, Comrade, I can't stand it—it's night and day—day and night—my head— [*Exits Left.*]

[FIRST OLD WOMAN *takes pack—goes off R. Loud speaker stops—waltz begins.* PIMPLES *enters—he goes to* NINA.]

PIMPLES

Hello. You look ill—anything the matter?

[FEDOR *looks around, sees* NINA.]

NINA

Bit tired, that's all.

PIMPLES

Can I do anything, Nina?

NINA

You can leave me to myself.

PIMPLES

Sure?

NINA

Perfectly.

PIMPLES

Hello, Fedor. [PIMPLES *exits.*]

[FEDOR *goes quietly and stands looking down at her.*]

FEDOR

Nina.

NINA

Oh, Fedor! It's you. How are you?

FEDOR

Quite well. But you, Nina? I haven't seen you for days.

NINA

I've been away with a girl friend.

FEDOR

You look ill.

NINA

No, only tired—just work.

FEDOR

It's not your work that tires you, Nina.

NINA

What then?

FEDOR

The dog's life you live with that animal you call a husband.

NINA

Drop that.

FEDOR

No, I won't—the way he speaks to you in public would prove it to an imbecile.

NINA

[*Gets up—goes away from him.*] Please! You look after yourself and I'll attend to my own affairs.

FEDOR

[*Follows her.*] Leave him, Nina.

NINA

[*Wearily.*] If you don't stop I shall have to go on—and I'm tired.

FEDOR

[*Placing his hand on her shoulder.*] There! I won't say another word. I would do anything to help you, because I love you—his treatment of you drives me mad. [NINA *tries to rise, she then falls back.* FEDOR *catches her and seats her again.* SHE *closes her eyes.*] You are ill. [*Sits by her.*] What is it, Nina?

NINA

It will pass. A little dizziness—I've just left the hospital.

FEDOR

Hospital! At last we have the truth! Where's Terekhine? Couldn't he go with you? Or even call for you afterwards?

NINA

He's very busy—

FEDOR

Nina, please drop this faked-up pride. Speak frankly for once. Why don't you leave him?

NINA

I don't know— [*A pause.*] Yes, I promise I will go away from him—but where could I go? You ask me to leave him because you think it would be better for me—I wonder—I could never love anyone again—when I am alone, I am unhappy. For me it is a choice of being miserable with him, because he is unkind to me, or being miserable without him, because I am alone. I'm frightened of being alone.

FEDOR

I am here, Nina. I am your friend—we could always be together.

NINA

Do you think so?

FEDOR

I want to take care of you.

NINA

No, Fedor—you would always be waiting for my love, and I couldn't give it to you. I could never feel anything but friendship for *you*. You are one of the few who know how to control yourself and that is why you would suffer and then finally leave me.

FEDOR

No, we would work together for the good of the mass. Terekhine is wearing you out, you are becoming a bad Communist.

NINA

[*Up to* LENIN'S *tomb.*] Ah, always that—a bad Communist! He says that too—all the time. Not a bad human being—I could bear that—no—only—a bad Communist—a bad Communist. I was fifteen when the revolution started. Perhaps I have had too much of the other life and I shall always be middle-class in a land where there's no room for any classes—I suppose it is bourgeois to want to be happy—everything must be for the mass—even when he insults me I know that he is saying things that are quite true. They must be true. Lenin and everybody says the same.

FEDOR

To help the mass you must think for yourself, that's economy.

NINA

Yes, and it's also the cruelty of it. The kind of lives we have to live seems such an injustice to me as human

beings—[*pauses—looks at* TOMB—*wanders over to bench*] then a whirl of compassion follows—I can't see clearly and I'm miserable. He says it's middle-class for man and woman to live together.

FEDOR

Only when it's destructive to one or the other.

NINA

In the whole of Moscow I don't know one couple who live properly together. [*Down on bench.*]

FEDOR

You're wrong—there are many who live splendid lives but they are quiet about it, they don't brag of their virtues as all the rest brag of their vices. Rottenness is loud and insolent, it draws a hood over the eyes of the intelligence. It gives our enemy and the rest of the whole world a chance of calling us unhealthy.

NINA

Aren't we?

FEDOR

No—the ideal will sweep away the rottenness.

NINA

It can't. The rottenness is in ourselves. There are thousands and thousands of fine lads *true Communists*, honest and good. At their mass work they are all fine human beings, but in their private lives they are rotten with their women, they are reverting to the animal—

FEDOR

No, no! My little Nina, can't you see that those bad things have been carried out of the past ages. We can't outgrow our past overnight. But we must outgrow it. We will outgrow it. That is why men like your Terekhine must be destroyed.

NINA

Communism would come between men and women?

FEDOR

I know it seems that way to you. If it hadn't been for my position I would already have attacked Terekhine.

NINA

You are mad. I won't say another word to you—your position—it's nothing—nothing—what is it?

FEDOR

I can't attack Terekhine because they would call it a personal affair. He says I want to steal his woman from him—well I do—and no personal affair can ever carry weight with the Council.

NINA

I'm so tired—if only I could understand. He may love me still and I may be to blame for everything. [TEREKHINE *comes on. He is just going to sit on the bench when his attention is arrested by the sound of* NINA'S *voice.*] But there are times when his brutality

is so horrible that I feel a *bullet* would be better than life with him.

FEDOR

Nina, you have really come to that?

NINA

Yes, it would be the press of a trigger and then the end, the end of the humiliation and the vulgarity—the end of being shamed before everybody.

TEREKHINE

[*Comes down to them.*] So—[FEDOR *rises*] you are the gentle little piece of humanity who never talks to anyone—you never gossip, do you?

FEDOR

You damned eavesdropper!

TEREKHINE

We'll meet later, Comrade—if you want to give evidence of your disloyalty to the Cause, I have only to shout for a few Comrades.

FEDOR

Shout then!

[NINA *runs up to him, gets between them.*]

FEDOR

You—

NINA

[*To* FEDOR.] Go away—go away at once— You say you are my friend—please go.

[FEDOR *struggles for a moment with himself, then abruptly turns and walks away, picks up his paper and exits.* NINA *sits.*]

TEREKHINE

I don't quite know what name I'm going to call you after this—

NINA

I told him I didn't want to talk to him—it seemed to grow.

TEREKHINE

Lying again—this meeting was arranged—you are neither of you any use in the Community—you're too filthy.

NINA

Constantine!

TEREKHINE

I don't want you, but don't for one moment think I'm going to let you go off with Fedor—you talk very prettily of purity and modesty, but you are nothing better than a whore!

NINA

Constantine, don't shout. You accuse everybody of shouting while you do it more than anyone.

TEREKHINE

[*Looking around.*] There's no one here who knows us—now understand, if I find you with him again, I'll smash his head in.

NINA

[*Quietly.*] What about Lisa?

TEREKHINE

I'm having a little affair with her—that's all about Lisa—she's smarter than you and she's direct, she doesn't whine when she's made love to—

NINA

Do I?

TEREKHINE

You preach morality, like one of the saints of the time of darkness—but really you're just a female.

NINA

I'm so tired, Constantine. I left the hospital only half an hour ago. [BEGGAR *enters, goes straight across stage.*]

TEREKHINE

I knew that would come—"I've only just come out of the hospital"—that's the way you all try to get a man in the long run—well my answer is that I don't care a damn. Run after Fedor and tell him your sad story.

[*He exits. The* "International" is heard through the loud-speaker. NINA *sobs.*]

BEGGAR

Hungry, hungry, hungry— I'm hungry, citizens—in the name of the mass give me a kopek to buy bread. It's not much to ask—bread, a slice of bread—in the name of the mass—bread. Hungry, hungry, hungry—

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE II

The room is the same as that which we saw for a few moments at the end of Act One, Scene I. It is evening and the electric light is burning. LUTIKOV, BESSEDA, PIMPLES, PIOTR, VASSILI, BEZBORODOV, *and* ANDREI *are seated around the table, studying.* BEZBORODOV *has fallen asleep over his books.*

The Lenin tomb is in a brilliant glow of light. Everything else in the background is in utter blackness.

LUTIKOV

[*Shuts book, gets another.*] There, that's finished. [*Looking at his watch.*] Six hours! Fact is, Comrades, we work too much, we wear ourselves out.

VASSILI

Have you heard this? The Americans have a mechanized system of education, they instill a full knowledge of everything into their pupils in eight days.

LUTIKOV

What damned nonsense you are talking, Vassili. The scientific movement will do a great deal but it can never do that—not even in America!

VASSILI

Well, what the devil can it do?

LUTIKOV

The Communist will rule all *nature* by means of the *machine*. But before we get to that stage we must have a complete mechanization of man, so that not one vestige of this individualism remains. Not until then can we entirely overthrow that superstitious twaddle called religion. First in Russia, then in the East, and after that in the entire world. The world will have to accept us, because Science is now the only possible world religion. As Comrade Lenin said; "Communism is the power of the Soviet plus Electrification."

BESSEDA

The more I study the less I seem to understand—

LUTIKOV

Why do you study involved subjects like philosophy? You're a peasant. If you can drive a nail in a board straight—that's enough for you. What's the difference to you whether your nose is on your face or your face is on your nose? You don't need it. Let it alone.

BESSEDA

When I come across something which I don't understand, I can't gulp it down merely because it is in the book or because Comrade Lenin said it. I have to understand it in my own mind. But I can't and I don't know where to turn for explanation, for everybody pretends

to know everything and when I ask a question they laugh. Tell me Comrade Lutikov, is Electrification a conscious instrument? What is the power of the Soviet? what has it to do with Science, or the overthrow of religion? I don't understand.

LUTIKOV

If you study until you die, you will never understand. [PIOTR *leaves the table.*] It isn't your fault, you are a peasant, and you will always think like a peasant. You work and accumulate learning, but you accumulate only for yourself. It is impossible to explain to you because your basis is individual. You will have to be born again into our life, to grow up in it, in order for you to grasp our soul, our mass soul. You can never escape. You will become part of the machine in time, but first you will attempt to specialize, to become a savant, but you will react and become a bourgeois again.

[STUDENTS *take up study again.*]

BESSEDA

Well then, what am I to do? I feel like a horseman at the crossroads, whatever way I turn it will be the wrong road. If I do what you tell me, my heart tells me I am wrong, if I do what my heart tells me, you tell me I am wrong. What shall I do, Comrade Lutikov?

[PIOTR *returns.*]

LUTIKOV

Leave thinking to those who don't feel. You are a

bourgeois at heart, you think you are thinking—you are only feeling, and you get nowhere. In your heart you still worship Nature like an ignorant superstitious farmer. Go to the Factory, worship grime, smoke, steel, the laws of mechanics—become part of the resurrecting machine and you won't have to think. Leave study for those who have goals beyond bourgeois dreams of beauty and happiness, and feelingful individual lives—that nightmare and tragedy of the past. Those who deserve to study are those who can say, to hell with humanism, with justice, with the individual and his lousy predilections, to hell with luxury stolen by hook or crook or even superior wisdom from one's fellow men. Communism is struggle, endlessly. If you can't subsist on plain living and plain thinking, you're a bourgeois and you are a useless and dangerous impediment to proletarian progress.

[PIOTR *springs up suddenly and then sits down again.* VASSILI *looks up from his writing.*]

VASSILI

What's the matter, Piotr? Do you want to say something?

ANDREI

No, he doesn't want to talk. Do you, Piotr? [*Behind* PIOTR.]

PIOTR

[*Springing up again.*] Yes, I do. Why do you torture Besseda with your cold, heartless theories—which you yourselves don't understand?

VASSILI

Tell me what you mean.

PIOTR

I tell you that your Communism is impossible. You can only communize *public services,* and you can't make the whole world into one public service! [*Snarls from everybody but* VASSILI.] You can't turn men into one huge principle. That you can do only with eunichs. The moment you get outside of the Government service, your Communism is finished. [LUTIKOV *bangs on table—rises and goes away.*] Look at our specialists—they were placed in charge of our mass factories. Individuals elevated to high positions because they were to be useful to the mass. Elevated because the mass was too stupid to know what it wanted, let alone know how to achieve its desires. Right off each of these specialists was given three or four rooms to live in. And by now they have taken advantage of their position and have become profiteers living on the employees. Swine and thieves, that's what our Specialists are. The Rust has eaten into them, and it will eat into all of us. This is not my Russia, not the Proletariat for which thousands of our dead lie all over Russia—this stinks —stinks! That is why I am going to do something which will take me out of Russia without a passport —see!

[*He draws a revolver from his side-pocket and points it to his head, but before he can fire,* ANDREI *rises—*

grabs his hand—forces it up and the shot is fired in the air. Siren. BEZBORODOV *wakes up at shot.*]

PIMPLES
That was a near shave.

VASSILI
The damned fool.

BEZBORODOV
What the devil's that?

BESSEDA
Sit still, Comrades.

LUTIKOV
Good Lord!

[*Spoken Together.*]

[ANDREI *wrenches the revolver from* PIOTR *who collapses and buries his head in his hands.*]

ANDREI
What do you want to do? Do you think that killing yourself is your *own* affair!

BEZBORODOV
Well why don't you shoot him for it?

VASSILI
We will have to report this. [NINA *enters carrying a few parcels, she stands in the door listening.*]

ANDREI
Oh no, we won't. It was only the sensitive Piotr playing a joke on us. Trying to tell us that he is

free to dispose of himself as he wishes and that those who fell at his side during the revolution were also joking—

BESSEDA

Quite right—and also that those who are carrying on the work are having a little quiet fun all to themselves.

ANDREI

Look here, Comrades, that was the cowardly deserter who saved my life when death seemed certain for us both. "Look after yourself!" I pleaded, as he carried me on his shoulders. The worm answered, "I won't leave you until the end." [*Takes* PIOTR's *head—kisses him on either cheek.*] —and now he wants to make an end for himself by deserting us all—like a ship's rat, he wants to run away from danger! [*Hugs him.*] Piotr Comrade—how could you desert us—you—you old bastard!

NINA

What's the matter, Andrei?

ANDREI

Nothing—only Piotr playing a joke on us.

BESSEDA

Yes—he pretended he wanted to kill himself.

NINA

[*Placing hand on* PIOTR's *arm.*] I can understand—I can feel for you Piotr—but that cannot be a solution. It might be simpler for many of us—but it isn't fair to the others. I have often wanted to be free of life—but I couldn't throw my burden upon the

shoulders of those who were already overburdened. It is those like you who can suffer greatly that we need the most— Stay with us, Piotr—we love you—we need you. [*She kisses him.*]

PIOTR

I know, Nina. I know. Thank you Comrade— [*Goes up to door and then back.*] Don't gossip about me— this first time. It's very difficult for me, and I feel— ashamed. [*Falls on bed,* NINA *goes over and sits by him.* VOZNESIENSKI *enters. He has a newspaper in his hand and jumps on to center of table.*]

VOZNESIENSKI

Comrades, save yourselves! Listen to this. This autumn two thousand students will arrive in Moscow. That means fifteen in every student's room. Slow death I call it.

PIMPLES

Let's hope they're a bright lot. [BEZBORODOV *yawns.*]

BESSEDA

I don't believe it, see.

LUTIKOV

And damn it, you're right.

ANDREI

Let the living live. Bah!

[*Spoken Together.*]

[TEREKHINE *enters carrying some more bottles of beer in a basket. He is a little the worse for drink.*]

TEREKHINE

What's the matter with you?

[PIOTR *runs out of the room.*]

TEREKHINE

[*Placing bottles on the table.*] Hullo! Hullo! Hullo! [*Looks directly at* NINA.]

[ALL *start and look around.*]

VOZNESIENSKI

What's the idea?

ANDREI

Who asked him here?

LUTIKOV

Chuck it, Terekhine.

BESSEDA

Oh, go to the devil.

BEZBORODOV

Do you want anything?

VASSILI

One of the new students. Ha, ha!

PIMPLES

That's right, Terekhine, liven things up a bit.

LUTIKOV

You're rather sudden, aren't you, Terekhine?

[*Spoken Together.*]

ANDREI

[*Looking from* TEREKHINE *to* NINA.] What's happened? You both look as if you'd been at examinations for a week. You look done in.

TEREKHINE

Stop work for a moment Comrades! We're going to have a little party here.

LUTIKOV

Why?

TEREKHINE

[*Ironically.*] To celebrate the six months of joy which Nina and I have spent together. Hurrah! [NINA *turns away. Sweeping some of the papers and books on one side,* TEREKHINE *begins to unpack the parcels. Shoves* BESSEDA *out of way.*] Come on Pimples—help!

BESSEDA

What about my work? I was just about to begin and now this again. First somebody shoots a revolver and now everybody will get drunk.

TEREKHINE

To hell with your study. When nine people want to drink and one wants to study—ten people drink. Remember that as an aphorism, out of the mouth of Constantine Terekhine, who on the tenth anniversary of the Soviet Republic, is to be elevated to the position of Chairman of the City—Farm Relations Committee.

I will let you all drink my health. Nina, give me those packages.

[NINA *goes to him with packages.*]

PIMPLES

You've got a lot of stuff, Constantine.

ANDREI

It's difficult to get as much as that. Where did it all come from?

TEREKHINE

That's my secret. Anyway this much I'll tell you, I'm Constantine Terekhine, chairman of the City-Farm Relations Committee, and I'm not an "old timer" for nothing. I'll be back in a moment.

LUTIKOV

Where are you going?

TEREKHINE

To get more beer—we couldn't carry it up in one trip. [*Exit* TEREKHINE.]

PIMPLES

I'll go and dig up a few of the others. Come on, Vassili and Andrei.

[VASSILI *rises,* NINA *begins to undo the packages on table.*]

ANDREI

We might as well do the thing properly.

PIMPLES

We'll get Fedor and Petrossian.

LUTIKOV

I should leave Fedor out.

PIMPLES

Anyway there are Varvara and Lisa. . . .

[*Enter* LISA.]

LISA

Don't worry about her, she's here. Hello, Comrades!

PIMPLES

There's going to be a party, Lisa.

LISA

[*Glancing at* NINA.] I know.

PIMPLES

Good. [*To* VASSILI *and* ANDREI.] Come on. [*Exeunt* PIMPLES, VOZNESIENSKI, VASSILI *and* ANDREI.]

[BESSEDA, BEZBORODOV *and* LUTIKOV *continue their studies. The* TWO WOMEN *talk across the table.*]

LISA

Hullo, Nina! So you are celebrating the fact that you have lived for a whole six months with one man? It's immoral!

NINA

Comrade, please let me alone. Can't you understand that I have no wish to wrangle with you—

Have a little respect for my feelings. [*Walks away.*]

LISA

Feelings!

LUTIKOV

Shut up, Lisa.

LISA

Oh, but this trapping and holding of one individual by another is stupid. We've got to live freely.

NINA

Each of us must finally define freedom for herself.

LISA

Of course those of you who can't escape from bourgeois traditions—you want to establish families.

NINA

And if I do, hasn't that been done since the world began?

LISA

The world began with the Red Revolution. You with your family! You want to drag us back to the days of the slave owners when the Capitalist encouraged breeding so that he would have more human beings to put into his grinding machines.

NINA

That's a lie. I too want to believe in our future. For whom are we creating a new state if not for future

generations? I should like children who will live in the future we are building and who will express the love I feel for one man.

LISA

[*Laughing.*] So you shut your eyes to his infidelities and pretend that you are its sole possessor.

NINA

Love can sometimes forgive. You won't understand that.

LISA

Bah! Middle class nonsense!

NINA

You are like Terekhine. You think that the words middle class close every discussion. You're so anxious not to be sentimental that you lose your humanness. There are many like you these days.

LISA

I'm like no one. I'm independent!

NINA

Yes, and a social menace.

LISA

I hope I will always be to your ancient orthodox ideas. I am a Communist. An individual who is part of the mass.

NINA

Yes Comrade—one who makes the mass the excuse for her brutal selfishness.

[BEZBORODOV *gives a loud yawn which makes* BESSEDA *jump.*]

BESSEDA

What in God's name is that?

BEZBORODOV

Nothing! That always happens when I am bored. It's my nerves!

LISA

If you stopped loving him would you leave him?

NINA

Yes.

LISA

And if you go on loving him, I suppose you'll go on living with him for the rest of your life.

NINA

Were that only possible!

LISA

What servile female psychology! You make a frame and place yourself in it. It's vulgar! It was the cause of all the scenes and tragedies of the past.

NINA

And of a happiness which you, Comrade, will never know.

LISA

No one has a right to be happy apart from the mass. You can't always drink out of the one glass—it's disgusting! [*Both start to get angry.*]

NINA

Do you want to become everybody's glass? You and the men who run after you are like animals!

LUTIKOV

Now then, girls—you'll have to drop this.

NINA

You won't stop *me*. I have no respect for animals.

LISA

Animals? Sure, and we're proud of it! We *are* animals.

NINA

There are still women who can be Comrades with many men—who can study with them—work with them. But their love they give to one man, they bear his children—they urge him to greater service. They suckle the future at their breasts. Every decent woman thinks as I do.

LISA

[*Laughing.*] Decent women? You talk like those creatures of a past civilization, the women of England and America.

NINA

You may parade as a Communist lioness, but we know what is under your skin.

LUTIKOV

Communist lioness—that's good. Lisa, we'll dress you up one day—a sow in a lion's skin.

TEREKHINE

[*Enters bringing in another basket of beer bottles.*] Come on, boys and girls. Hullo, where are the others? Now then Nina, take off your mittens and lend me a hand. [*Pushes* BEZBORODOV *out of his way and his books on the floor*—BEZBORODOV *collects them.*]

NINA

[*Wearily.*] All right, Constantine. [NINA *goes to him and helps him to unload the bottles.*]

TEREKHINE

And for once in your life try a dose of cheerfulness.

LISA

Cheerfulness, oh my Lord! [LISA *gives a loud sharp laugh.*]

[PIMPLES *enters.*]

PIMPLES

I can't find Fedor.

TEREKHINE

Damn good job too.

PIMPLES

The others are here.

[ANDREI, VASSILI, VOZNESIENSKI, VARVARA *and* MANIA *wander on.* VARVARA *goes to* NINA.]

ANDREI
I'm rather dry.

VOZNESIENSKI
What about a little music?

LUTIKOV
Who's that new girl?

VASSILI
Let's get on with the joy of life, eh?

BEZBORODOV
The whole crowd here?

PIMPLES
What a party, eh?

VARVARA
Good evening Comrades, where's Nina?

LISA
Hello, Andrei, Vassili, what a crowd!

BESSEDA
Do any of you ever work? Why don't we have a discussion?

[*Spoken Together.*]

TEREKHINE
While there's drink, let us drink!

[LENOV *bursts in—gets on table.* LISA *sits on his lap.*]

ANDREI
Hullo, Comrade Lenov!

LISA
Ah, ah! old Lenov, silly, damned fool.

VARVARA
What does he want here?

BESSEDA
He'll drink the lot.

PIMPLES
More singing.

BEZBORODOV
Now there'll be a row.

VASSILI
Oh, hell!

VOZNESIENSKI
Good, now we'll have a song.

[*Spoken Together.*]

LUTIKOV
Here's the blessed poet. How did you get here—

LENOV
I came because Pimples murmured something about a party. And what's a party without a poet?

TEREKHINE
You're quite right, Lenov, have a drink. [*Gives him a bottle.*]

VARVARA
[*To* NINA.] Hello, Nina.

NINA

Varvara.

TEREKHINE

[*Suddenly seeing* MANIA.] And who may you be?

MANIA

My name is Mania, Comrade.

VARVARA

She is a friend of mine from the Pokrovskoy factory.

TEREKHINE

[*Goes to* MANIA *with a bottle of beer.*] A pretty girl is always welcome to any party I give.

MANIA

[*She goes over to* NINA.] You're Nina Verganskaia, aren't you?

TEREKHINE

Come on, drink! All of you! [*Gives two bottles to* LUTIKOV. VARVARA *takes a bottle from table. They cluster round the table and help themselves to drink.*] Before I was sent here to the University— They gave me a commissioner's job—150 miles south of Kazan. God how dull it was! Then I began to play up to the Red Army. We formed a drinking club, the military police and I—and here's the truth, Comrades, in six months I was the champion drinker in the district.

PIMPLES

You wouldn't have been if Lenov had been there.

TEREKHINE

You know we used to make a drink called a Bear—it was half whiskey and half beer—it takes hold of your soul. Come on Lutikov—have a Bear.

LUTIKOV

No. I value my life too much.

TEREKHINE

You civilian weaklings— [*To* MANIA.] Come on and drink with a military man.

MANIA

No, thanks.

[TEREKHINE *puts his arm around the girl, who again repulses him.*]

TEREKHINE

A pretty girl like you should never be shy. You're a nice female. We'll meet again, won't we?

MANIA

[*Trying to compromise.*] Well yes—why not?

TEREKHINE

Drink, all of you! Here's a bottle for you. Well, let's drink to our new friendship. [*Hands bottle to* MANIA. MANIA *takes a sip.*] No, you must drink it straight off.

PIMPLES

Oh! Look at Constantine, Lisa. He seems to be taking on a new one. You'll soon get the sack.

TEREKHINE

[*Hits out at* PIMPLES *who dodges.*] You mind your own damned business.

LISA

The sack? Ah, ah— I'll look after myself. Comrade Nina is the one who should worry.

VARVARA

[*Going down to* NINA.] I say, Nina, why do you let him do it?

NINA

Oh, leave me alone, Varvara.

TEREKHINE

[*To* NINA.] You have to make scenes don't you. She was only kidding and you have to make a scene— [*To* MANIA.] Don't be silly, pretty girl—nobody minds here.

MANIA

Let me alone, I tell you. [*She pushes him away— He almost falls.*]

TEREKHINE

There! That's the spirit I like. Give us a lively song, Lenov.

LENOV

No, I can't.

VOZNESIENSKI

Why not?

LENOV

I'm in the dumps!

PIMPLES

What about?

LENOV

The fate of Russian literature!

TEREKHINE

Not at a party! Here, have another drink. [*He gives him a large bottle.*]

LENOV

Nobody wants poems in these days. If I write about life as it really is they call me a pessimist.

NINA

[*Forward to table. Cheering up.*] That's not the trouble, Lenov. If anyone of the Comrades writes half a dozen lines he immmediately considers himself a poet. He leaves everything, the cell, his work, even his friends, except those who will buy beer for him.

[*Enter* PETROSSIAN.]

TEREKHINE

She spoke a whole speech—don't listen to that barking—write if you want to—but now, drink.

PETROSSIAN

Hello! I've only just heard about the party. Rather difficult to get here too.

TEREKHINE

Well, now you are here—have a drink. [*Takes* MANIA *up to bed.*]

PIMPLES

How about a dance?

[VASSILI *plays.* LENOV *gets down from table. A chorus of agreement.*]

PIMPLES

Help me take the table out.

ANDREI

Careful, you ass, tilt it a little more this way. That's right now.

LISA

This is just about where the real fun begins. Hello, Pimples.

VARVARA

Go on boys, hurry up.

BESSEDA

Now then—gently—gently—so—take it easy.

PIMPLES

What a mess. Is there nobody to organize here.

BEZBORODOV

God help Russia.

VOZNESIENSKI

Mind the bottles, you damned fool—we don't get beer ever day, eh?

[*Spoken Together.*]

LUTIKOV

Here, you lift that side— For God's sake let me do it alone.

PIMPLES

No—we work as a mass.

[*Some of the* STUDENTS *help in the clearing. Dancing begins.*]

ANDREI

[*Comes to* NINA.] Cheer up, Nina.

NINA

[*Who is off at one side—to* ANDREI.] I can't get that affair of Piotr out of my mind. Why did he do it?

ANDREI

Don't you worry about that, Nina—he'll be all right.

PIMPLES

[*To* LISA *who is in top bunk.*] Lisa, may I kiss you?

LISA

Well, there's nothing to stop you, is there?

PIMPLES

I'm afraid of Terekhine.

LISA

Don't you worry about him.

[PIMPLES *about to kiss her when* TEREKHINE *turns round and sees him.*]

TEREKHINE

[*Shouting.*] Hey! [*He pulls* PIMPLES *down.*] Look

here, Pimples, my son, kissing isn't your job. You don't know how to do it. Maiden or no maiden—Communist or bourgeois—paving the way for a kiss is more than half the fun. Isn't it, Lisa? [TEREKHINE *climbs up to* LISA.]

[PIOTR *appears in the doorway. All quiet on* PIOTR's *entrance.*]

PIOTR

Is Fedor here?

ANDREI

No, he's probably at the Supervisor's.

VASSILI

Come on in, Comrade, and have a drink.

PIOTR

No, I must find Fedor. [*Exit* PIOTR.]

TEREKHINE

[*Jumps down and sprawls on floor.*] Damn that fellow, he gives me the creeps.

NINA

Poor Piotr, he can hardly look anyone in the face.

[*Dancing begins again.*]

VASSILI

[*From the top of the pile of beds—singing*]

"My first love has burnt out,
My first love has burnt out,
My first love is dead."

NINA

That's just what I feel, Andrei. My first love has burnt out.

TEREKHINE

Well, I'm so glad you noticed that. Heh! Do you know what a termagant is? No, you don't. [*He turns up to* MANIA *and grabs her and starts to dance.*] Come on, let's dance.

MANIA

[*Breaking from him.*] No, I'm going. [*She rushes out of door.*]

[TEREKHINE *staggers after and at the door shouts.*]

TEREKHINE

All right, you little devil, you wait!

ANDREI

Come on, some of you, let's dance!

LUTIKOV

[*Crosses to* NINA.] Nina, will you?

NINA

No, thanks, Comrade, I don't feel like dancing tonight.

[*Dancing slows, then stops.*]

TEREKHINE

[*Seated at table, overhearing, imitating* NINA.] "I don't feel like dancing." What do you mean? Dance when you're asked, damn you!

NINA

[*Quietly.*] No.

TEREKHINE

[*Threatening her.*] By God, you will.

LUTIKOV

Stop it, Terekhine. I'm so sorry, Nina. What a stupid thing for me to do. [*Goes away.*]

TEREKHINE

She must dance, I tell you. Do you think I'm going to let her spoil things here as she does at home? [*To* NINA.] You pose as a puritan when in reality you're as filthy-minded as the lowest of the low.

NINA

Yes, Kostya. One gets so low, one can't go any lower—

TEREKHINE

Dance!

NINA

[*Up to door.*] No. [*Exit.*]

TEREKHINE

By God, you will.

VARVARA

[*Going straight up to him.*] Terekhine, stop that!

TEREKHINE

Who the devil?

VARVARA

Stop it, I tell you.

[TEREKHINE *stumbles up to the door and shouts after her.*]

TEREKHINE

Damn you! [*Exit.*]

LISA

Her Majesty the Queen has withdrawn her presence. [*Laughs.*]

VARVARA

You shut up.

PIMPLES

That reminds me of a funny story!

LUTIKOV

What a fool! He's lost control of himself.

VOZNESIENSKI

Well, don't be a bigger fool and interfere.

VASSILI

If ever there was a bourgeois row, that was one.

FENIA

What a hard life she has.

LENOV

Don't bother about other people's lives.

ANDREI

Come on, let's dance.

[VASSILI *strikes up a loud dance tune. There is a hectic baccanal during this next scene. A shot is heard,*

dead stop all action in room, they ALL *turn and look to the open doorway.*]

ANDREI

Piotr!

[FEDOR *and* PIOTR *rush in.*]

FEDOR

What has happened, Comrades?

ANDREI

Piotr? But then—

PIOTR

[PIOTR *rushes out and returns in a moment—eyes wild.*] It's Nina Verganskaia! She's killed herself!

[*This following is a ripple of movement and sound down to the last word spoken.*]

LUTIKOV

Poor girl!

VOZNESIENSKI

Killed herself—Nina?

BEZBORODOV

What a brute!

VASSILI

Oh my God!

PIMPLES

Poor little girl.

BESSEDA

What a waste.

VARVARA

Terekhine. Damn him!

LISA

The weakling—the stupid weakling!

FEDOR

Nina!

PIOTR

Nina?

[*Very low in the distance is heard,* "Arise Ye Children of Starvation"—*music—very low siren.* ALL *look towards center.*]

VERY SLOW CURTAIN

Act Three

ACT THREE

SCENE I

The room is the same as that which we saw in the preceding scene.

The Lenin monument is brilliantly lighted. All else around the room is in darkness. The room itself is flatly lighted.

ANDREI, *Secretary of the cell, is reading some papers. All the other* STUDENTS, *with the exception of* PIMPLES *and* TEREKHINE, *are present, and are moving excitedly about, discussing with one another.*

[*At rise of curtain general confusion.*]

VASSILI

Well, the cell had to be called together and there it is.

BESSEDA

It's so obvious to me after the way he bullied her.

PIOTR

It all seems so unnecessary, the whole thing. We all know the truth!

FENIA

Some of you women should protest and protest hard, too.

MANIA

I tell you we women are more dissatisfied with the results of the revolution than the men. [*Spoken Together.*]

LENOV

You seem to me to be a bright lot in the Sverdlov University—judging by your ugliness!

VOZNESIENSKI

I tell you I can't hear a word you say—not that it matters.

PETROSSIAN

So—of course the girl was trying.

LISA

If that happened us girls would have a nice lively time of it.

VASSILI

Come on, Comrades, can't we get on with it?

ANDREI

Just one moment, Comrade, the inquiry must be made in order. [*Down to table, sits, bangs on table.*]

VOZNESIENSKI

[*To* FEDOR.] You know there's no law governing this. There's no provision in the Code for such a case.

LUTIKOV

The cell will make its own law. Do you think we will allow one of our comrades to be tortured into committing suicide?

LENOV

Perhaps she—

VARVARA

Are you going to suggest she killed herself because she was happy?

LUTIKOV

No real Communist has a right to kill himself.

BESSEDA

But she might have had some other reason.

ANDREI

Yes, you blockhead, that's what we're here to find out.

LISA

Personally, I think the girl was contemptible. She poisoned the life of a man and then she killed herself.

VARVARA

Are you speaking seriously?

LISA

Absolutely. She had an abortion—she took the benefit of the Communistic regime—then free herself—she had no human chain around her husband's neck—she went on weeping—and then—killed her-

self. I believe she killed herself simply to get him into trouble.

VARVARA

Will you repeat that before the meeting?

LISA

I'll say that and some more. Do you think I'm frightened?

VARVARA

No, you're just a soulless creature. [*A step to* FEDOR.] Do you know, Comrade Fedor, I hate that man so much that at this moment I believe I could take a revolver and shoot him.

[TEREKHINE *and* PIMPLES *enter.*]

LISA

Hello, hello!

VOZNESIENSKI

Now we can get on.

LENOV

Good.

BESSEDA

Terekhine at last.

VASSILI

Here he is.

[*Spoken Together.*]

TEREKHINE

[*To* MANIA.] You're a pretty little spitfire, aren't you? [*Sits on bunk.*]

VARVARA

[*Comes to front of table.*] It was only when she put a bullet through her head that we realized his brutality. Nina was all brightness and joy before she came here. The way she acted with Piotr it's impossible to believe that she killed herself.

VASSILI

She had no right to do it, she rated her own life at a higher value than the well-being of the mass.

[ANDREI *breaks in.*]

ANDREI

We'll take that up later.

VARVARA

Of course she did. Men turn women away from the cause and make mere females of them.

MANIA

That's not true. All men are not like that. Are they, Fedor?

FEDOR

No, not when they are true Communists.

VASSILI

Exactly, that's all that matters.

BESSEDA

He's quite right.

[*Spoken Together.*]

VOZNESIENSKI

Why, of course we all agree.

PETROSSIAN

No one would doubt.

ANDREI

Comrade Voznesienski. Take this notification of our meeting to the Commission of Control. [ANDREI *gives him a paper.*] Here, take this. Comrades, take places.

[VOZNESIENSKI *exits.* ANDREI *rings a bell.* TEREKHINE *pushes* PIMPLES *off seat and sits in his place.*]

ANDREI

[*Rises.*] Comrades! An urgent and extraordinary meeting of the cell has been called. All students have a right to attend. Party or non-party. A complaint has been lodged by certain Comrades. Nina Verganskaia has killed herself. Comrade Terekhine, her husband, has been accused of being the cause of her suicide. This procedure is very unusual, but the council asked our cell to discuss and settle this matter. The following order of the day has been proposed: (1) to give hearing first to the group which has made the complaint. (2) To take the deposition of any persons opposing these complaints. Is there any Comrade present who objects to this order?

ALL

No.

[VOZNESIENSKI *returns.*]

TEREKHINE

[*Rises.*] I—

ANDREI

Upon what grounds?

TEREKHINE

Upon all grounds—you bastards! Most of the *Comrades* have come here in the same spirit as they would go to a cinema—they want drama or twaddling sentimentality. I will appeal to the Central Committee.

ANDREI

It would not overrule a finding of the cell.

TEREKHINE

I tell you I won't have it! You've come here, all of you, to fling my dirty linen about! To create a scandal with Terekhine as the central figure. Damn it! I will not permit my private life to be the subject of discussion, nor as a Communist, do I have to submit to it!

LISA

That's right, Terekhine, don't you stand their damned interference.

PETROSSIAN

You can't help it, a cell has been called.

VOZNESIENSKI

That's for us to say.

FENIA

In a way he's right. Why should he?

PIOTR

You'll have to, Terekhine.

[*Spoken Together.*]

BESSEDA

This isn't your private life.

VASSILI

Won't you, well we have the right to decide that. We'll tell *you* what is a mass affair—you won't tell us.

PIMPLES

[*After all noise ends.*] Of course, that's exactly what I think.

[*Spoken Together.*]

VASSILI

What?

PIMPLES

Eh—what—just—what you all said.

VASSILI

Jackass!

ANDREI

You are here to answer for a crime against the Community.

TEREKHINE

Let those who have made the complaint go before the Central Committee or the Commission of Control.

VASSILI

Afterwards if you like.

BESSEDA

Why should they?

PIOTR

We can't do that now.

[*Spoken Together.*]

LENOV

Yes, they are the ones to decide.

VOZNESIENSKI

Why should we?

PETROSSIAN

For what purpose?

LISA

Quite right. Let men decide—not this tribe of milk-fed babies.

[*Spoken Together.*]

TEREKHINE

Let us know the names of these pious defenders of justice!

ANDREI

Does anyone present think it necessary to answer?

[*General cry of "No."*]

PIMPLES

[*Comes forward.*] Permit me! [*They all look at* PIMPLES *and he grows extremely embarrassed.*] What I mean is—eh—I—we—you—eh—well—we mustn't say anything. [*Loud laughter from everybody.* PIMPLES *sits down again.*]

ANDREI

All in favour of Comrade Terekhine's proposal raise their hands. [TEREKHINE, LENOV *and* LISA *raise their hand.* PIMPLES *begins to put up his hand, then looks round and quickly lowers it.*] Against— [ALL *the*

others raise their hands and say "Against."] The question is settled. We will continue.

TEREKHINE

I protest. Make a note of that. I don't care a damn about your decision. You can talk yourselves dry here without me. I'm off! [*Goes up to door.*]

VASSILI

There goes the leader of the mass.

ANDREI

Right. Go if you want to. Comrade Fedor, will you speak first?

TEREKHINE

[*Turning in the doorway.*] Of course. *He* would be the first.

FEDOR

Comrades. It was I who headed the list of signatories. I ask to have Terekhine expelled from the party.

LUTIKOV

Expelled from the party?

PETROSSIAN

Never hold office again?

PIOTR

Lose his new chairmanship?

BESSEDA

Kill him politically?

BEZBORODOV

Make him work for his living!

[*Spoken Together.*]

TEREKHINE

[*Looking round.*] Me? Expelled from the party? You're a fine lot. Led by a jealous maniac! Me, expelled? And you listen to him, you ninnies!

ANDREI

Comrade Terekhine, you will either leave or not disturb the meeting.

TEREKHINE

Consider that I have left.

ANDREI

Then don't interfere. Comrade Fedor.

FEDOR

Comrades, under the circumstances, it is so difficult for me that I am afraid I shall not speak very well. Firstly, it is my opinion that as a Communist, Nina had no right to kill herself. She should have left her man, Terekhine.

TEREKHINE

Yes, to go to you. Listen seriously to him, Comrades—this is an extraordinary intellect! [*He spits.*]

[ANDREI *bangs on table.*]

FEDOR

I am convinced that under normal conditions she would never have taken her own life—but she was under the influence of great mental disturbance.

LISA
Well, it was her own fault.

PIMPLES
Of course, there's another side.

PETROSSIAN
Yes, we know.

VOZNESIENSKI
She was distracted.

LENOV
How do you know that?

[*Mumbled Together.*]

FENIA
Poor little Nina.

PIOTR
Everybody knew that.

BESSEDA
That's understood.

VASSILI
Of course she was.

FEDOR
So who is there among us who would dare to blame her? We are not here to deal with her action. But to find out whether she was driven to suicide! And whether it is our duty to punish an indirect murder and an act of individualistic duress!

TEREKHINE
[*To* ANDREI.] Why don't you call that driveller to order?

ANDREI
Shut up, Terekhine. If you don't—

VASSILI
I thought he had left.

BESSEDA
Yes, shut him up.

PIOTR
He has a right to speak.

FENIA
Go on—go on!

VOZNESIENSKI
Kick him out, Comrade Secretary.

[*Spoken Together.*]

PIMPLES
Let him alone.

LISA
Well, what will you do?

PETROSSIAN
Yes, shut him up or let him get out.

LENOV
He's here to defend himself.

TEREKHINE
Then tell *him* to shut his calumnious mug!

FEDOR
Comrades, my accusation is that Comrade Terekhine systematically tortured Nina Verganskaia and

drove her to the sin against the Community of taking her own life.

TEREKHINE

Damn you! You'll have to prove that.

ANDREI

Quiet there!

FEDOR

That is where we were at fault, Comrades. We behaved like those brainless people who called themselves civilized before the glorious Red revolution. We all saw it, and for the sake of our own peace of mind we took no notice.

LUTIKOV

Try to tell something to Terekhine. Talk to the wall!

PIOTR

We were all afraid of him.

BESSEDA

That's true enough.

[*Spoken Together.*]

BEZBORODOV

Well we're not afraid of him now.

VASSILI

He bullied all of us—not only Nina.

FEDOR

I am far more at fault than any of you. Because, for selfish, narrow-minded reasons I was a coward. I

ought to have brought this question before the cell long ago.

LUTIKOV

Rot! The cell can't intrude in private lives.

FEDOR

Don't lie! [*Reading from a small book which he has taken from his pocket.*] "He who knows and is silent is a criminal." Again, [*He turns to another page.*] "He who remains silent becomes an accomplice." [*The* OTHERS *take out their books and look it up.*] Comrades, we stood by and saw a valuable Communist life destroyed by a bully. Even now we are separated when we should be standing together. Consulting books instead of our mass heart. Let's face the truth. We used to work with fine enthusiasm and now we are all of us apathetic. [*Put books away.*] That stinks of death.

PETROSSIAN

Hold on, Comrade.

LISA

Perfectly childish.

LUTIKOV

Who talked about death?

[*Spoken Together.*]

LENOV

What's he talking about?

FENIA

Does he mean that?

PIOTR

That's true enough.

BESSEDA

He's going a bit too far.

VASSILI

You're talking muck.

VOZNESIENSKI

A packed of damned lies.

PIMPLES

Oh, go to the devil!

FEDOR

Among us are certain individuals who are more dangerous than our millions of enemies outside the frontiers of Russia. It's unhealthy.

LISA

And do you represent the healthy element?

LENOV

Keep quiet.

FEDOR

Because we respect the memory of their physical deeds during the revolution we allow them to express theories which are like abscesses in a healthy body, some debauched members of the Party accept these theories with delighted enthusiasm, because it enables them to indulge their lazy libertinism, and from *these* Communists the entire world judges us.

PETROSSIAN

Here don't shove us all into one bag.

LUTIKOV

He's telling the truth.

ANDREI

Silence, Comrades.

FEDOR

Yes, and we must get at further truths, and upon our insisting upon the truth, and upon our further insisting that our findings be honored and executed—lies the basis of our future safety and enthusiasm. Terekhine's unworthiness is only the first, and I propose that he be expelled from the party. And in addition, that in his records be written that he is a disgrace and a pollution to the Communist Cause.

[*For a minute the whole meeting is thrown into confusion.*]

LISA

Blacken his record—like that. Shut him up—smack his mouth!

LUTIKOV

But expulsion is absolute political death.

BEZBORODOV

That's why he suggested it.

VASSILI

He's not had a hearing yet, that would be damned unfair—

PIMPLES

I don't see why, do you—now I think—

VOZNESIENSKI

I agree with Comrade Fedor. He should be expelled from the party at once, what's the good of hearing any more?

BESSEDA

Shut up! Shut up all of you! How can we get on with the meeting of the cell—if you shout at each other like this? It's the same with everything. Order! Order!

[*Spoken Together.*]

PIOTR

You can't do that, it's too soon to take a vote—we've not heard what he's got to say.

LUTIKOV

After all—you are all of you wrong. Terekhine can't be chucked out—he fought in 1918.

PETROSSIAN

Yes, chuck him out at once. Then he can carry on the thing before his precious Commission of Control.

[LENOV *pushes group into corner. He remains in front.*]

LENOV

Listen, listen, listen, Comrade. May I speak—

ANDREI

All right, Comrade Lenov, but get off my papers first.

PIMPLES

Don't let him sing a song, Comrades.

VASSILI

Someone put an old hat in his mouth!

LENOV

Now listen to me, Comrades, you are none of you going the right way. If we continue, we shall soon have another revolution. We are not at a district political meeting now. I don't see any kid-gloved ladies present. What's it all about? A comrade has killed herself. What makes you think that Terekhine was to blame? She killed herself, therefore she was a bad Communist. Why should a good Communist, who was at the front during all the glorious years, be blamed for her death? They quarrelled. And you? Is there no one else here who quarrels with his woman? If a man of the party is to be expelled every time some kid kills herself—

VARVARA

[*Coming forward.*] Kid!

LENOV

—then the devil help us! We shall soon have no party to expel him from!

PIMPLES

Thank God he didn't sing.

[VARVARA *smacks him.*]

LUTIKOV

Funny devil Lenov.

PIMPLES

It seems to me—but listen—

[VARVARA *pushes him back. There is laughter and some approval.* PIMPLES *shrugs shoulders.*]

VARVARA

May I speak? [*The* SECRETARY *nods.*] I don't belong to your cell but I have worked for several years with Nina Verganskaia. You're a clever beast, Lenov!

LENOV

[*To* ANDREI.] Comrade, call her to order.

VARVARA

"Expel a man from the party because of a kid!" Wasn't the "kid" as you call her, one of the party? She was worth ten thousand Terekhines.

PETROSSIAN

That's what I say.

LISA

Shove some muck in her mouth.

BESSEDA

That's right, Varvara.

[*Spoken Together.*]

LENOV

Kick her, Comrades.

VASSILI

Twenty thousand, I say.

VARVARA

Yes, and more than all of you men put together. But she dared not speak! The little imbecile! How many imbeciles have you got at home who hold their tongues and are ashamed because they want to make a pretence of keeping their respectability. There are very few men in the Communist youth who are real Comrades. Only by grouping together can women give you beasts a lesson!

LENOV

There's a sweet little Lysistrata for you.

VARVARA

Go on, laugh, when you should be crying. Everyone of us is part murderer of Nina, and you laugh. She was victim of mass weakness—of mass stupidity. Now of course, you are most of you sorry to death for the degradation which caused Nina's death, but you will go from here and say to some Nina or Anna, "Why the devil hayen't you got my dinner ready?" Terekhine did much worse, he said to Nina, "Get out of my way." Well Comrades, she went—and so that we may never have to listen to him as an equal again and never have to obey him as a superior, he must be turned out of the party.

[Lisa *comes forward—applauds.*]

Lisa

Bah!

Andrei

Comrade Gracova.

Lisa

Comrades, I've known Comrade Terekhine very well— [*Laughter.*] What I mean is— I didn't mean to say that— [*More laughter.*] Terekhine is a real Communist and Nina poisoned his whole life. Why did she stay with him, he was sick of her? All she had to do was to clear out. Did she? No! She clung to him like a fluttering bourgeois! She followed him about like a dog. She couldn't work and she wouldn't let him work. Terekhine fought well and now you turn on him, when you should be leaning on him. Bah! I despise you. I've got friends on the General Committee. [*Laughter.*] You'll see what I will do for true comradeship and free union.

Pimples

Put the bitch out.

Lenov

Good Lisa, tell them the truth.

Lutikov

I can't agree with that.

Vassili

What filthy nonsense.

[*Spoken Together.*]

PETROSSIAN

Ha! Ha! Free union.

VOZNESIENSKI

Give her a good thrashing.

BESSEDA

You paid for it right enough.

FENIA

Yes, you'd like to get them all.

LISA

[*Shouting.*] Cowards not Communists, that's what you are! [*She is pulled down.*]

TEREKHINE

Damn your sex! You treat me as though I were dead! Can I speak now?

ANDREI

Speak. You would have been called on before if you'd been reasonable.

TEREKHINE

How can one be reasonable and listen to such stupidity? I say we have a right to live as we like and no cell can interfere with us. Comrades, all we have to do as Communists is work well for the *Cause,* nothing else matters. It's not the cell's business to listen to cheap scandal. And some of you younger members had better keep that in mind.

LENOV

That's right, Terekhine.

TEREKHINE

Now I'll tell you something, if you go on doing this kind of thing you'll soon become retrospective—and begin talking about the good old days and personal liberty—

LISA

Bravo!

LENOV

[*Puts an arm on* TEREKHINE'S *shoulder.*] Good old Terekhine!

PIMPLES

Well, I—

FENIA

I'm sick of this.

[*Spoken Together.*]

VOZNESIENSKI

Knock him on the head.

PETROSSIAN

Get on with it for God's sake.

BESSEDA

He'll talk all right.

TEREKHINE

My life with Verganskaia was a perfect hell—she wasn't a Communist, she was a bourgeoise.

PIOTR
That's enough, Comrade.

PIMPLES
He's right, you know.

VASSILI
Can't someone stop him?

LENOV
Think of the old days.

BESSEDA
He's talking all right.

LUTIKOV
I'm getting hungry.

PETROSSIAN
Get on with it for God's sake.

VOZNESIENSKI
You're a damned bourgeois yourself.

FENIA
Repeat that before the Commission.

[*General confusion again.*]

[*Spoken Together.*]

TEREKHINE
Quiet, you braying asses! [*Bangs table.*] I'm the oldest member of the party present—I've been in it for nine years, and I've never lied yet. I was made so miserable by that woman that at one time I wanted to ask to be sent to the Salt Mines. I couldn't stop her

middle class jealousy. Could I? Was it my fault that when she wasn't having hysteria, she was quarrelling and nagging like a market woman? She did it in front of others, too. It was she who caused my revulsion of feeling. Now, I'll tell you another thing. I wanted to have a child, a young, true Communist. She refused because she didn't wish to be bothered.

[FEDOR *springs forward.*]

ANDREI

Comrade Fedor.

FEDOR

He is lying!

TEREKHINE

You keep quiet, I'm talking.

[*Fight.*]

PIMPLES

Don't fight in the cell—stop it!

LUTIKOV

Don't shove me in the back.

VASSILI

Push them back.

LENOV

Keep them apart. They can't fight here.

BESSEDA

Hold on, Terekhine.

[*Spoken Together.*]

LISA

Go on, Terekhine, knock his face in.

PETROSSIAN

Here, keep them apart. Get between them.

VOZNESIENSKI

They can't have a row here I tell you.

ANDREI

Comrades! This is a meeting of the party.

TEREKHINE

[*In a trembling voice.*] What is the use of talking?

FENIA

May I speak?

ANDREI

Comrade Fenia!

FENIA

I'm not a member of the party yet. And I do not understand very well. Does it all mean that you don't want to be bound by any rules? That you don't want to have any duties to social life? Is that it? But men and women are not bourgeois unless they want to be. Terekhine is more bourgeois than anyone here. He uses convention to gratify his own selfishness. He would force women into what is called free love—free love which always turns to free hate within a fortnight.

VOZNESIENSKI

That's right.

PETROSSIAN

Yes, damn it, that's it.

LISA

Bosh!

BESSEDA

Lord, yes.

PIOTR

Quite right.

LENOV

That's an insult to us.

VASSILI

I've said so always.

LUTIKOV

I'm tired.

PIMPLES

She's right.

FENIA

I agree.

[*Spoken Together.*]

LISA

[*Sarcastically.*] Hurrah!

PETROSSIAN

You fools! You are all over excited.

PIOTR

[*Holding group back.*] No, we are not over-excited. We discuss passionately—that is a good thing—it ventilates—it blows away the dust. This party is

a body into which some foul microbe has penetrated, and most of us are like the healthy corpuscles of the blood. We are throwing ourselves upon the infected spot—we want to get rid of the malady.

TEREKHINE

You gas bag of a suicide!

PIOTR

Yes, I tried to kill myself and you loaded my gun.

TEREKHINE

What a pity I loaded it so damned badly that you are still alive!

PIMPLES

Poor old Piotr.

LUTIKOV

What a cur!

PIOTR

You can say that.

BESSEDA

It's a pity you're alive.

[*Spoken Together.*]

VASSILI

What a brute.

LENOV

Yes, we know what you are.

LISA

Ah, ah! That's right, Terekhine.

PETROSSIAN

That's just what you would think.

VOZNESIENSKI

Damned bully!

PIOTR

The difference between us is that I wanted to get rid of myself because I felt that I was useless—and you wanted to get rid of others because they were no longer useful to you. There is a moment when private life should be interfered with. If you Comrades had helped me would I have tried to kill myself? No, our lack of interest in each other is the sign of our disintegration. In that moment when you go mad you don't notice it yourself, others have to come in and help you.

TEREKHINE

I need help from no one. [*Starts at* PIOTR.]

PIOTR

Why if the truth were known—you at this moment are more mad than I was.

LUTIKOV

This discussion has lasted long enough. I propose that it be closed.

ANDREI

Comrades, you have heard the proposal, any objections?

TEREKHINE

I'm off. But I give you one warning. I am going to

the Commission now. Cells all over the country have been dissolved because of offences against the party.

[*As he goes—various murmurs.*]

OMNES

Who's stopping you? From now on nine will drink and one will study. Find a new cell to bully. Go and stay away!

TEREKHINE

Go to Hell! [*Exits.*]

[PIMPLES *follows.*]

ANDREI

Take places—the office proposes to expel Terekhine.

LISA

And we vote against it.

ANDREI

Comrades who are against the proposal? [LISA, LENOV *raise hands.*] Who are for it?

[*All other hands go up.*]

LENOV

Oh, hell. [*Exit* LENOV *and* LISA.]

ANDREI

Repeat after me and then let it be known to all members! Comrade Terekhine is expelled from the party.

OMNES

Comrade Terekhine is expelled from the party.

[*At this moment* PIMPLES *runs in with a note which he gives to* ANDREI *who reads.*]

ANDREI

"Comrades of cell fourteen: The Commission of Control requests you to hold your body intact and your decision under advisement and in abeyance, subject to its consideration of it. The Commission will visit the cell meeting within the hour. In the interval the cell is asked to reconsider its decision."

Signed Loukitch. Chairman.

FEDOR

Terekhine's work.

VASSILI

They may make it hot for us.

BESSEDA

Won't I ever be able to study?

PIOTR

We are permitted to fight for our beliefs.

LUTIKOV

This wouldn't be the first cell they have dissolved.

[*Spoken Together.*]

FEDOR

Comrades, we have decided. Do we stand by that decision or are we becoming frightened again? Are we men or cowards?

ANDREI

We shall see Comrade Fedor. Repeat after me: Comrade Terekhine is expelled from the party.

[*They look at each other for reassurance.*]

OMNES

[*With dead seriousness—earnestness and emphatic calm.*] Comrade Terekhine is expelled from the party.

["International" *is heard and very slowly a group of people march on carrying a red coffin. All sit quietly, slowly*—PIMPLES *slowly exits—once outside he races off. They take position of ease—silence—as they wait —the coffin is about center.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE II

The scene is the same as the preceding. Outside the room, and to either side of it are two benches.

In the room, three MEMBERS *of the* COMMISSION OF CONTROL, *are seated, with their backs to the audience.* A SECRETARY *is at their left.* FEDOR *is seated in the room. The* MEN *are busy, exchange a word or two with each other while the scene outside is being played.*

Outside the room, several of the STUDENTS *are composed in a group, waiting and discussing in low tones. The group outside can be seen only dimly. Also the room is dimly lighted. All else is blackness.*

ANDREI

The inquiry had to take place, he threatened that.

LUTIKOV

After all we anticipated that, but what to do? [*Spoken Together.*]

VASSILI

We ought to formulate some plan. Be prepared!

PIOTR

The important thing is to talk as a mass, and not to be frightened.

PETROSSIAN

Can you imagine what life will be like if he is not expelled? I think I would be the next one to kill myself.

ANDREI

As soon as Fedor comes out, and we know what line of inquiry they are following, we will formulate our defence.

[LISA *and* PIMPLES *have wandered over to them.*]

PIMPLES

Hello, Hello.

PETROSSIAN

Well, Pimples, have you made up your mind whether you are for him or against him?

BESSEDA

[*Looking up from his book.*] You know this sort of thing does interfere with work.

LISA

Perhaps you would like all of us to be silent, sweetheart, so that you can concentrate better.

VASSILI

Well, Pimples have you been called to testify?

PIMPLES

No. They haven't come to the important witnesses yet.

ANDREI

Besseda! [*No answer. Comes and looks over his shoulder.*] Comrades, he's actually reading atmospheric pressure while he's waiting.

LUTIKOV

Does anything have any effect on you, Besseda?

BESSEDA

Yes, one thing does.

LUTIKOV

What?

BESSEDA

Atmospheric pressure, when I'm disturbed in my work!

ANDREI

Come on, boys and girls, let's go a little further away.

[*They walk away.*]

PIMPLES

I don't see why we should.

BESSEDA

Because you in particular will get kicked if you don't.

PIMPLES

Come here a minute, Lisa. You know the Russian Revolution is an interesting experiment.

LISA

Oh shut up—you little horse-fly. If they want me I'm with Lenov having a beer. [*She goes off.*]

[*In the room*—LOUKITCH, *seated center, turns to* FEDOR.]

LOUKITCH

Now Comrade Fedor—what is it you were about to say?

FEDOR

That we students are convinced and certain, that Nina Verganskaia took her life, only because of the brutality of Comrade Terekhine.

LOUKITCH

Inscribe that in the report, Comrade Secretary. Now pass us the personal records of all concerned. [*They go into a careful reading of the records.*]

MANIA

[*Enters.*] Who's in there now?

BESSEDA

Fedor.

MANIA

Will he be long?

BESSEDA

How the devil should I know?

TEREKHINE

[*Enters.*] They are keeping us a long time, aren't they?

BESSEDA

Oh, my Lord! [*Saunters off reading.*]

TEREKHINE

Comrade Mania, I haven't seen you for some days. I've missed your company.

MANIA

After what I heard about you—I didn't want to see you.

TEREKHINE

You have been listening to lies. If you only knew everything.

MANIA

I do.

TEREKHINE

If you will only listen, I shall tell you the truth. I was terribly unhappy with Nina Verganskaia.

MANIA

Was—and only the other day I was talking to her.

TEREKHINE

I was very badly wounded in '18. Almost killed, as a matter of fact. That has made me very high strung. Perhaps I was a little quarrelsome, but she tied my hands. I couldn't stand that. I am a Communist and I must be free to work—she used to torment me with

bourgeois selfish demands. I knew she was middle class —I tried to cure her and I couldn't. Because of that my love for her died out.

[PIMPLES *listens.*]

MANIA

You said all that before the cell.

TEREKHINE

Before that crew! They are a lot of infant slobberers! Listen Mania—I worked underground, I was in the war, I've always worked for the revolution. I've never been able to confide in anyone before. But now I see that at last I have found someone who understands. May I confide in you, Mania?

MANIA

What is there to confide?

TEREKHINE

They are all against me, they're happy now. Why are they against me—why not against Fedor? Because they're all middle class like him, because I can't live as they pretend to live. I am the only one to fight against the bourgeois and that's why all these bourgeois are against me. I can tell you more. They knew that Nina was monkeying around with him, did they help me—no. I'm like a wolf surrounded by them—they're preying on me—I can tell you more.

MANIA

Be careful, Constantine.

TEREKHINE

The Commission is on to them, and especially to the fact that all their animosity is the careful propaganda of their leader.

MANIA

Who is their leader?

TEREKHINE

Fedor. I've just told you that he deceived me with Nina. I never mentioned that out of respect to her. The Commission knows that, too. Now you're beginning to understand—to see the true light, eh my little Mania—now you see in what danger I go about in serving our great Cause? The Commission knows it too. They know that Fedor is a danger to the party, and that it would be better if he went the way Nina went.

MANIA

What do you mean, Constantine?

TEREKHINE

Nothing, except that it is he who ought to be expelled.

MANIA

Why?

TEREKHINE

Never mind, Mania. I don't care about any of them. You are the only one I want. You must believe in me. Say you do.

MANIA

You see, Constantine, I can't say yet. I think I do, but I can't be sure.

TEREKHINE

Well learn to know me better. I'm like the palm of a hand—I don't lie—I don't cover things up to you—look, read—the main thing to a human being is belief in him. Believe in me, Mania. Come to me tonight—I'll be all alone.

MANIA

I don't know if I ought to.

TEREKHINE

But it's so necessary. All the tenderness in my being is desperate for companionship—tonight after I am acquitted—come to me, dearest Mania.

MANIA

Are you certain that you will be acquitted?

TEREKHINE

If I am acquitted, will you come? Oh, Mania, I need you so. You must come—you will come—won't you? [*Both get slowly up.*]

[PIMPLES *runs back.*]

MANIA

Yes I will—if it is so necessary.

TEREKHINE

And now go to the others and listen well to what

they say, but say nothing. [*She goes—after a firm handshake—he sprawls on a bench.*]

PIMPLES

[*To the* STUDENTS.] Listen—listen everybody—you ought to have seen Terekhine. Real American technique—they kicked him out of the party, and half an hour later he's monkeying around with a girl. This is how he got her—I'll have to remember it— "When I'm all alone in the evening—and no one's around, come to see me"— That's a real fellow, there's the one we should imitate.

LOUKITCH

Everything in your record is in order. Of course your parents were bourgeois—but we will overlook that.

FEDOR

It is difficult to answer for one's parents. But since my seventeenth year, my allegiance to the cause has been unwavering and unquestionable.

LOUKITCH

Is there any personal feeling as between you and Comrade Terekhine?

FEDOR

Only that of an outraged Communist.

LOUKITCH

Nothing more?

FEDOR

No, Comrade.

LOUKITCH

[*To* SECRETARY.] Call Comrade Terekhine. [SECRETARY *goes to door and calls* "COMRADE TEREKHINE."] That's sufficient, Comrade Fedor, wait outside!

[MANIA *comes up to group.* FEDOR *off—the* STUDENTS *greet him outside.*]

GROUP

What did he say, *etc. etc. etc.*

FEDOR

Nothing, nothing, nothing—nothing yet.

SECRETARY

Comrade Terekhine.

TEREKHINE

All right, Comrade. [*Enters room.*]

LOUKITCH

You are recalled. Brief interrogative. Remember economy of words this time.

TEREKHINE

Right, Comrades—go on.

LOUKITCH

[*Reading from dossier.*] Report among Comrades: you claim: (1)—To have been revolutionary conspirator before '17. (2)—To have been condemned by the White Army to exile. Place of your work, pre '17?

TEREKHINE

You see, Comrades, I really didn't work very long and few people know about it.

LOUKITCH

You worked Goujon's factory pre '17. [TEREKHINE *is silent.*] List names, men worked revolution Goujon's factory pre '17. Your name not included. [*Looks at* TEREKHINE *who is still silent.*] Now as to the White Army.

TEREKHINE

The sentence is just gossip. I once said, "Life is a sentence in exile," and perhaps they thought I was bragging.

ZAVIALOW

Reported you have wife and child. Living?

TEREKHINE

Yes, but I can prove that the child is not mine.

LOUKITCH

Child existing. Why did you bind yourself to Nina Verganskaia?

TEREKHINE

It was she who insisted on the union—I didn't. I only wanted to have an affair with her.

NIKOLAI

So you are defenceless—against her. Now tell me, what does having an affair mean exactly?

TEREKHINE

It means—well, don't you know?

LOUKITCH

So—wife living—married to Verganskaia—lived with Lisa Gracova same time. How did you manage all that?

TEREKHINE

I wanted to do better work for the party, Comrades, and so I satisfied my natural needs.

LOUKITCH

Natural needs exaggerated.

TEREKHINE

We all have different temperaments.

ZAVIALOV

They say you committed the crime of being pessimistic.

TEREKHINE

I—pessimistic—who accused me of that?

ZAVIALOV

No matter— True or not?

TEREKHINE

It matters to me if Fedor said it. Comrades, inspect the cells of the Universities better. Comrade Loukitch, you know me. When we were forced to escape from Orel was I pessimistic then? And now they say I have committed this crime. Pessimistic! The swine! In a week we are beginning a celebration. These students

will carry flags, but I will be off to the farms, extracting wheat from the thieving Kulaks. That's pessimism. When I am with the students, I alone denounce every bourgeois tendency. I fight for Bolshevik concepts, and for the party decisions. Have I ever refused a call to duty? I'll tell you what this question resolves itself into, Comrades. Do you want to pander to a few weaklings with their namby-pamby intellectual theories, or do you want to encourage those who have proven that they are deserving of the name Bolshevik and the name Communist? How would you like to live with a woman —who worried you with her unhappiness, her discomfort, her despondency, her threats to take her own life? Shall I mourn her now because I am free? No, my first love is my Communist duty, and I am worthy of your confidence and not of your censure. At the front we had difficulties. We call them difficulties and we fought them down. Now if we say there are difficulties and that we must fight them, we are accused of being pessimistic.

ZAVIALOV

There's a great deal of truth in that.

TEREKHINE

Of course there is. The man who is lying about me is Fedor. I would never have said this to anyone, but I cannot hide it from you. He caused this scandal about me. He won't forgive me because Verganskaia lived with me. He was jealous.

LOUKITCH

[*To the other councillors.*] Make sure!

ZAVIALOV

Right.

LOUKITCH

[*To* SECRETARY.] Call Comrade Fedor. [*The* SECRETARY *goes to door and calls.* FEDOR *immediately enters.*] Comrade Nikolai, put questions.

NIKOLAI

Comrade Fedor, is it true that you held other sentiments than those of comradeship for the woman Verganskaia?

FEDOR

It is true—I loved her.

NIKOLAI

Why did you not tell us?

FEDOR

It has no bearing upon the affair. I suppose Comrade Terekhine suggested it as an explanation of my zealousness in this trial. Comrades, do not permit him to throw you off the scent. Comrades, it is a whole cell, not I, who demands his expulsion. Under the protection of his office he has been guilty of every kind of communistic crime. He does not work for communism, but for debauchery, for belly-communism—miscalled freedom. All that we bore in the name of his past work and even his present work—but when he forces fine Communists

to take their lives because they are driven out of their minds by his bestiality—there our mass must step in and say, "An end! This we the mass will not tolerate! An end!" And we demand his expulsion—not only because of his unfitness, but because he is in our eyes a murderer of a fine Communist whose life he ruined.

TEREKHINE

Go to the peasants with your theories, and they'll spit in your eye—you with your delicate sensibilities —but I get grain—yes—even for your slobbering mouth.

LOUKITCH

Silence! Inquiry finished. Comrade Terekhine wait outside. [*Exits.*] That will do, Comrade Fedor. We must discuss.

FEDOR

[*Down to group.*] We must stand together—Terekhine's orating again.

GROUP

Well, what shall we do?

FEDOR

I don't know yet. We'll have to wait and see—I don't know!

NIKOLAI

What have we to decide? To me the affair is clear. [*To* SECRETARY.] Write: The decision of the Committee of Control is that Constantine Terekhine remains expelled from the party.

ZAVIALOV

What?

LOUKITCH

But you said the case was clear.

ZAVIALOV

It certainly is clear to me. Annul the judgment of the cell. Reprimand with warning, but reinstate him. You are carried away with youth.

LOUKITCH

I agree. He's at fault. But the fault is not big enough for expulsion.

ZAVIALOV

Keep him in the party. Educate him!

NIKOLAI

This particular youth no longer requires education. It's too late now, we must think of the others!

ZAVIALOV

It is never too late. He drinks? So do the others. Pessimistic? He must be cured. Young woman kills herself. Others say his fault. Questionable! Good worker. Send any of the others on his work—they will say please, speak theories—he is nasty but he gets grain. Condemn him and what will peasants say? "Party member takes our grain, a week later he is expelled from the party." Next man who goes will be asked, "How long will you stay?" Bad for discipline. Besides what evidence have we? Something dishonest in Fedor.

In love with Verganskaia. Condemning Terekhine means acquitting woman—encourages suicide. Must not intrude into private life—we must not take individual sides.

NIKOLAI

We must exclude Terekhine because he depraves youth.

LOUKITCH

Long course of education needed. He's conducted himself badly with women. Reprimand is sufficient. Why not vote with us, Comrade Nikolai?

NIKOLAI

Remember this, these youths will say, "You see what the older Bolsheviks think. Such things don't interest them." Bear in mind that to them our decision will be the decision of the party. Bear in mind that they are the future of the party.

ZAVIALOV

In this case expulsion is too much. A warning and severe reprimand sufficient.

NIKOLAI

Comrades, this is the first time we have come to such disagreement. I swear to you that this decision is dangerous for the spirit of the party. I am going to appeal to the Central Committee.

ZAVIALOV

But they will refer back to us and the usual circle will begin.

LOUKITCH

Vote.

ZAVIALOV

Annul cell decision.

LOUKITCH

Annul cell decision. Write Comrade Secretary shorthand notes. [SECRETARY *writes.*] "Terekhine Constantine, Laborer. Student. Chairman of City-Farm Relations Commission. Member of party 1917. Fought on several fronts. Accused of corruption. No definite charge. Also accused of Non-Communist relationships with women. Remains within the party. Severe reprimand to be written in his records." [SECRETARY *finishes writing, hands document to* LOUKITCH, *he signs.*] Call the cell in, in entirety!

SECRETARY

[*Goes to the door.*] Cell number fourteen is requested to appear before the Commission of Control.

[STUDENTS *get up, look at one another. They file in. Two* GIRLS *remain outside. Music.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE III

Terekhine's room again. The room is rather neater and tidier than when we last saw it in Act One.

The trunk is open. Mania *is kneeling by it reading a diary.* Fedor *enters without knocking.*

Outside the room, people are parading and shouting. They carry banners on which are printed propagandist slogans. The Three Members of the Commission of Control *are standing on the Lenin monument. The parading continues until* Terekhine's *entrance.*

Fedor

Comrade Mania!

Mania

Oh, Fedor, how you startled me.

Fedor

You will never do it if you get frightened every time anyone enters the room.

Mania

I know it, but ever since you talked to me, and I began to look for things my nerves have been on edge. I feel as though I can't go through with it.

FEDOR

The same thing that happened to Nina will happen to you. You must, and it must be done today. Do you understand? Today.

MANIA

Yes, but I'm so afraid.

FEDOR

But you need not be. Vassili and I are keeping watch night and day. You have only to call and all the students will come to your help.

MANIA

I found a diary, Nina's—I've been reading it. [MANIA *gets diary.*]

FEDOR

Where is it? How long will it be before Terekhine returns?

MANIA

I don't know. He's gone to a meeting of the club.

FEDOR

It doesn't matter.

MANIA

[*Gives diary to* FEDOR.] I've made notes of the important passages.

FEDOR

Let me see.

MANIA

First reference is on page 18. It almost seems like a

voice from the dead. [*She looks over his shoulder.*] It begins there.

FEDOR

[*Reading.*] "Today I told him that if he continued to be so unmerciful I would kill myself." That seems as—

MANIA

No, go on. There's a lot more to come.

FEDOR

[*Continuing.*] "kill myself. He answered, 'well, that's for you to decide.' Then when he had gone out I saw that he had left his belt on the bed with his revolver in it just as though he had forgotten it."

MANIA

That's all there. The next important passage is on page 28. There.

FEDOR

"Today is the first time he ever struck me. I fell on the bed and my head hit against the wall. I became unconscious. Received a letter from mother. Mother! If you only knew how your Nina is suffering and how she longs for death."

MANIA

Now look at page 35, the last page she wrote.

FEDOR

"I've settled it in my own mind. This very day I will leave him. Constantine is not a man, he has become

just an animal. I feel as if I want to turn to the faith of my fathers for comfort. Suicide is a crime. Suicide is a crime. I haven't the right to kill myself. I am certain that there are no circumstances which could justify that. Then what does it all mean? This madness in life. I can't stay alone. I'm going to Fedor—"

MANIA

That's all!

FEDOR

One minute, Mania. [*He goes to table. He takes a knife from his pocket.*] Give me something hard, I want to cut out the last page.

MANIA

What kind of thing?

FEDOR

Here, this will do. [*He takes a flat ruler from the table.*] Hold it under the page.

MANIA

[*Helping him.*] Isn't that dangerous? He may have read it.

FEDOR

That makes it all the more imperative that you should act today. Now, everything depends on you, Mania. Everything depends on you—you understand. [*He cuts out the last leaf of the diary, puts it into his pocket and returns the book to* MANIA.] Here, put it

back in the trunk. [*But before she can do so* TEREKHINE *enters.*]

TEREKHINE

What are you doing here?

FEDOR

Get out of my way.

TEREKHINE

Certainly! And you keep out of mine! But before you go, as a good Communist, I feel bound to pay my debt to you. [*Strikes* FEDOR. *When* FEDOR *falls* MANIA *goes and kneels beside him.*]

MANIA

Constantine! You've killed him!

TEREKHINE

Not a bit of it. I've only knocked him out. He'll soon come round. Sprinkle his face with water and he'll wake up.

[MANIA *fetches a jug of water and splashes* FEDOR'S *face.*]

MANIA

Constantine! Why did you do it? He wasn't doing any harm.

TEREKHINE

No harm, wasn't he? You don't know him as well as I do. Besides, I was acting in self-defence. [FEDOR *opens his eyes.*] There you are. [MANIA *takes his hand.*]

FEDOR

We will meet again soon, Comrade. [MANIA *helps* FEDOR *to rise. He goes up to the door.*] Yes, very soon.

TEREKHINE

[*Opens door.*] Not if I can help it—and don't forget I am reinstated into the party. [*Bangs door. Suddenly catching sight of the diary.*] I'd forgotten all about this! Where did it come from?

MANIA

It was lying about.

TEREKHINE

He didn't see it, did he?

MANIA

No. What is it?

TEREKHINE

Never mind. [*He begins to tear out pages—he then tears the pages into small pieces, which he places in his side pocket. Turns to her.*] What was he doing here?

MANIA

He had just come in—he wanted to see you.

TEREKHINE

Why?

MANIA

I don't know, Constantine.

TEREKHINE

If you talk to either that man or Vassili again I'll—

No, I didn't mean that—but Mania, for your own good I don't want you to mix with them.

MANIA

Why, Constantine?

TEREKHINE

Well, you see with me to back you you will soon be a member of the Young Communist party and such men as that will be dangerous to you. Fedor is an intellectual ass and Vassili a laborer and nothing else. He's always on the wrong track. Besides, they are dishonest.

MANIA

Vassili's not a bad boy.

TEREKHINE

Bad—no! But they are both of them working against me. In the entire Verganskaia affair they—

MANIA

That's over.

TEREKHINE

I know. You never believed that I was unkind to her, did you, Mania?

MANIA

No, I didn't really believe it.

TEREKHINE

Of course not. It's too stupid. You've found me kind, haven't you?

MANIA

Yes. You've been kind enough to me during the past four days.

TEREKHINE

I shall go on being kind to you. And I want you to tell the others about it. You see after all the lies they told about me I must re-establish myself with the Comrades. That's why I want you to take every chance of telling them you are happy with me— [*Putting his arm around her.*] You are happy, my little Mania.

MANIA

Of course, very. There's only one thing that troubles me.

TEREKHINE

And what's that, little Mania?

MANIA

At night in the darkness—

TEREKHINE

What?

MANIA

I'm so frightened that I dare not even wake you.

TEREKHINE

Bah! You're superstitious. You imagine things. I've already asked them to give us another room. It's uncomfortable here—where *she* was.

MANIA

Oh, no! It isn't that—it's you.

TEREKHINE

I? What do you mean?

MANIA

Every night you say the same thing.

TEREKHINE

Do I say something that hurts you? Tell me what it is and I'll try not to say it again.

MANIA

You can't help it. You say it in your sleep.

TEREKHINE

I talk in my sleep? I never did such a thing in my life.

MANIA

You keep on repeating; "Comrade Commissioner, it was I who killed Nina Verganskaia!" [*Sits as if paralyzed.*] And you did kill her. You're a murderer!

TEREKHINE

[*His nerve has left him—he speaks at first with a hoarse voice.*] No—no—it's not true. It's not true. She killed herself. One of the Comrades saw the flash of the revolver that night I was nowhere near.

MANIA

[*Looking straight at him.*] Constantine Terekhine, you are lying, your face is pale. I can see it in your eyes. You're lying!

TEREKHINE

No. I couldn't lie about that. She did it herself. There

are no proofs. The Comrades would never believe you. It's all a lie, so you can say what you damn well like. See?

MANIA

There's the diary.

TEREKHINE

You read that?

MANIA

Yes. I have read it.

TEREKHINE

I've torn that up!

MANIA

Not all of it.

TEREKHINE

Is there another?

MANIA

It's no good looking there. It's in Fedor's pocket.

TEREKHINE

You gave it to him?

MANIA

Yes.

TEREKHINE

You devil!

[MANIA *backs into the corner.* TEREKHINE *follows.*]

MANIA

He's the one who suspected you. You never spoke one word in your sleep. That was a trick to get you to talk

and you've talked. You assassin! You hounded a girl to madness and then you killed her. You dirty assassin! And now your conceit has given you away at last. I thought I loved you and I've found you out. Fedor has got you at last and not all your sentimental bragging about your glorious behaviour in 1917 will save you now. The Comrades have got you at last, you assassin! Assassin! Assassin!

TEREKHINE

You are going to accuse me before them all, you—[*He seizes her by the wrists.*] No, no, no. Mania, my little high spirited Mania, don't go!

MANIA

I'm not frightened of you. Let me alone.

TEREKHINE

There, Mania, my dearest, you won't go without listening to what I have to say.

MANIA

You can say all that to the Commissioners.

TEREKHINE

Little Mania. Look, I implore you on my knees. [*He kneels to her.*] You can't accuse me—try to understand me. She threatened me, she stifled me, Mania, I couldn't breathe. It was she or I and I lost control of myself when she exasperated me that night.

MANIA

[*A step back.*] Then you did kill her?

TEREKHINE

[*He pulls her to him.*] Yes, I shot her to save myself. I'm telling you everything, my little Mania. You and I are going to do great things for the Cause. We will work together, as true Comrades.

MANIA

With that on our minds?

TEREKHINE

Yes, but we'll be straightforward and honest with each other. You see she was just like a creature of the Counter-revolution to me and I was justified. You believe me?

MANIA

No, I don't believe you.

TEREKHINE

You too, Mania!

MANIA

I can't even be sorry for you. You are too vile for that. Let me go.

TEREKHINE

Yes, yes, in just one little minute. Think of it, if you tell them, on all sides they will shout, "Terekhine is an assassin. Terekhine is debauched." They will turn me out of the party. They will say I preyed on women. They will even forget what I have done for the Cause and shoot me within twelve hours.

MANIA

Where's the courage you had in '19? [*Shrieks.*] Fedor!

FEDOR

Come on.

[*The* STUDENTS *rush in from all sides. Shrieking they seize* TEREKHINE *and drag him off. As the* "International" *plays the curtain falls—Siren.*]

CURTAIN

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